



One day, Mia was shocked to find that each lunchtime her school was cooking too much food. She was even more shocked to find that this nutritious and delicious food was then ending up in the compost bin. Mia knew that this was not right and immediately began looking for a way to donate this food. Unfortunately, sometimes donating hot food can be rather tricky to do... Read on to discover Mia's top tips for donating leftover food from school (when possible), reducing food waste in school and getting rid of unwanted food from home.

Step 1: Food Fighters

First, you need to decide who is going to be involved in Mia's Food for Thought. Find a group of like-minded pupils from your school to involve; Mia likes to call them 'Food Fighters'. Next, you will need to recruit adult support (they're useful for some things honestly). Top of the list is lunchtime staff as you will definitely need their help if you want your action to be a success.

Step 2: Waste Watchers

During Step 2, you will need to find a local organisation that will accept your donations. Try to find a local community group that will really appreciate your donations. You also need to find out if your school has a food waste problem. For a week, the Food Fighters should weigh and record how much and what sort of food is being wasted. Alternatively, simply count the number of bin bags of waste food. Finally, you may also want to ask the pupils in your school to audit their cupboards at home. They can do this by searching their cupboards to see if there are any long-life foods in them that their parents are never going to use (at Eco-Schools we always have cupboards full of tinned chickpeas that are never going to get used, it's easier to just buy hummus).

Step 3: Recipe for Success

There are three alternative ways you can support your local community group:

- 1.** If your school has a hot-food-waste problem ask the community group you have chosen to support whether they will accept hot food donations. Unfortunately, there are all sorts of issues surrounding hot food donations although it is possible. Your lunchtime staff will be able to help you identify what is safe to be donated. The local community group will also have to be willing to pick it up quickly in appropriate packaging as hot food is not allowed to drop below certain temperatures. If you are concerned about how you can donate hot food you can also search for charities on the internet that specialise in hot food donations and who are willing to advise you. You are probably by now seeing how difficult it is to donate hot food so remember to be nice when asking for your lunchtime staff's support as, for them, it is probably easier to just compost the waste. A top tip is that lunchtime staff love compliments, try regularly telling them how delicious your hot dinner was - believe me I used to get so many extra veggie sausages every lunchtime.
- 2.** If you can't find an organisation willing to accept hot food donations, why not try an action to reduce waste in your school canteen. If, during Step 2, you noticed that each week a lot of broccoli is getting wasted, why not take it off the menu and swap it with a alternate vegetable that you and your schoolmates like more? If Shepherd's Pie makes your school want to cry, why not suggest an alternative? You can reduce your lunchtime waste simply by identifying what people like and don't like and adjusting your menu accordingly.
- 3.** If you can't find an organisation willing to accept hot food donations, you have reduced waste in your school canteen, but still want to help your local community group why not ask for donations from home. Most parents have tins of food that they have bought on a whim and will never use. Other people will appreciate these tins so why not bring them to school to donate to charities. This will also: help clear out kitchen cupboard and allow parents to get rid of food they don't want without feeling guilty.

Step 4: Cooking up a Curriculum Link

Mia thinks that Food for Thought can be used as the basis for a whole PSHE topic, she also told me that she learns about measurement in school and weighing the food waste can be included in maths lessons. You could even display the data you have collected in a graph or 'pie' chart.

Step 5: Inviting People to the Feast

Mia suggests that to make sure your whole school knows about Food For Thought you can use posters, assemblies and PSHE lessons. Outside school you can let the community know about the brilliant work you are doing by informing local newspapers. You could even ask for quotes from your chosen charity to include.

Step 6: Monitoring Meals

The Food Fighters can check how successful your school has been by continuing to weigh the food waste bins (hopefully less is now getting wasted), asking the recipients of the food to keep a record of how many meals they have served using your donations and they could also record reviews from happy consumers.

Step 7: Food for Thought

Mia says: Eat me, drink me, don't waste me, what do you say?

DAVID
LUKE

