

# Around The Farm

## Celebrate Perfectly Perfect Food: Awareness on (just a small part of) Food Waste Reduction

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(Image 01: Some perfect rainbow carrots)

Sorting is an important part of harvesting on the farm. We usually spend a fair amount of effort filtering out those with “cosmetic quirks, odd shapes or irregular sizes” and keep those “pretty” ones for the market. While we are always trying our



best to minimize food waste, like through donation to local food banks and [UW Food Pantry](#), the truth is, on almost every farm, produce with cosmetic imperfections gets undervalued or even goes to waste because they are seen as imperfect and unmarketable. However, who gets to decide if a curly carrot is “imperfect” and “irregular”?



(Image 02: A perfect spaghetti squash and other perfect spaghetti squashes)

From the farm gate to the shelves of retail stores and people’s dining tables, food loss and food waste occur at every stage of the entire lifespan of a food product. Globally, around 14% of food produced is lost between harvest and retail, while an estimated 17% of total global food production is wasted (11% in households, 5% in

the food service and 2% in retail). ([Unite Nation](#)) In the US, about an estimation of 30-40% of food supply becomes food waste and food loss. ([USDA](#)) Though uneaten, these foods still take enormous resources to grow, harvest, transport, prepare – even require extra to be disposed of. Such an imprudent use of our food system resources can cause significant impacts across climate and natural resources, food insecurity, and the economy.

Cosmetic imperfection accounts for a large share of food loss and waste globally. In the US, approximately 20% of produce or more gets thrown out for cosmetic reasons like weird shapes, odd colors, or blemishes on peel. ([Food Waste Feast/ Why We Waste: Ugly Food, Expiration Dates, and More](#))





(Image 03: A perfect patty pan squash and other perfect patty pan squashes)

Every choice we make as consumers shapes our food system. What are the choices we are making? Our food system is shelves of perfectly round tomatoes, evenly red apples, bananas that bend at the same angle, and bunches of kale with exact size of leaves. We seem to like things organized, clean, predictable, and controllable. We feel safe that way. However, nature has so much more than that to offer. Why reject the beautiful chaos and exciting unpredictabilities and settle for the bland uniformity?

Trust me. The cherry tomatoes are the same nutritious and flavorful with or without a cute nose.



(Image 04: A perfect and very cute Galina cherry tomato)

Of course, the terrifying food waste crisis we're facing is not caused by rejecting misshapen produce alone. It is a much more complicated systematic topic. While the so-called "[Ugly Food Movement](#)" is expanding recently, it also has caused [debates](#) around the commodification of need and further gentrification of the food system. This article is not to make a statement for creating a market for the "waste," but simply trying to show something behind those perfect stacks of produce in grocery stores, and to share different aspects and opinions on food waste.



(Image 04: A perfect Sujo Long cucumber)