



INTRODUCTION

An investigative report on food wastage in Singapore by
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DIRTY SECRETS of a food paradise

food waste

[fu:d] [weɪstɪdʒ]
noun

The act of discarding raw or cooked food as it is deemed no longer fit for consumption or desirable. This includes i) “unavoidable” food scraps, such as peels and bones, and ii) “avoidable” food scraps—ranging from plate waste to overproduction waste.

TRY TO IMAGINE 10,000 SBS (Singapore Bus Services) double-decker buses lining the Pan-Island Expressway three times over, and you’ll come close to picturing the volume of food Singapore throws out every year.

That is around 570 million kilos of food, most of which are edible scraps.

For a tiny island that buys more than 95 per cent of its food from overseas, how are we capable of squandering one-fifth¹ of it?

While Singaporeans are keen to call the city-state a food paradise, mouths immediately clamp up when asked about food wastage.

Supermarkets that display an abundance of food on their shelves refuse to talk about leftover stock. Five-star hotels that boast gourmet

cuisines decline to comment on wastage in banquets. Even buffet service staff shrug and claim to know nothing about food wastage.

To get under the blanket of food waste secrecy, we spoke to over 200 people from all walks of life, snooped through food retailers’ garbage in the wee hours, spied on buffet operations, took up part-time waitressing jobs in five-star hotels and analysed food waste collected from 150 families.

Clearly, food waste goes beyond the plate. From the picky shopper who insists on perfect-looking fruits to substandard food prepared by the ignorant worker, there is more to understand how food wastage comes about in our everyday lives.

Food paradise or food waste republic? You decide. 🍌

¹Singapore generated 570 million kilos of food waste in 2008, according to figures from the National Environment Agency. Statistics from International Enterprise Singapore show that Singapore’s net food imports amounted to 3,000 million kilos in 2008. Using back-of-the-envelope calculations, Singapore may be throwing away up to 20 per cent of its overall food supply every year, given that it imports more than 95 per cent of its food.