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Exploring Food Waste Issues Winter 2024

## USDA Announces \$33.5 Million in Grant Awards to Expand Local and Regional Food Systems

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31, 2024— The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service today awarded over \$33.5 million for 113 grant projects in 43 states and territories to expand and strengthen local and regional food systems and increase the availability of locally grown agricultural products. The funding will be distributed through the Local Agriculture Market Program's (LAMP) [Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Programs](#) (FMLFPP) and the [Regional Food System Partnerships](#) (RFSP) grant program.

"The Local Agriculture Market Program is a key piece of USDA's efforts to strengthen local and regional food systems with over \$220 million awarded to 597 projects since 2021," said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt. "The projects will expand market opportunities for small and mid-sized producers, allow more money to stay within local and rural economies, and build resilience in our food systems."

FMLFPP is implemented through two grant programs, the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). The goal of the programs is to strengthen local and regional food businesses through projects that support farmers via the creation of targeted marketing capabilities; training on topics such as record keeping, fair pricing, family-friendly marketing and agritourism activities; and new market development.

This year, FMPP is awarding \$14.2 million to [60 projects](#) across 28 states and territories. The program funds projects that support producer-to-consumer markets, such as farmers markets, roadside stands, agritourism activities, community-supported agriculture programs, and online sales.

**Project Highlight:**

- The University of Wisconsin is receiving an FMPP grant to train and support 100 direct-to-consumer farmers to better understand key business management systems that result in increased sales and profitability. Early-career and direct-to-consumer farmers will learn financial management skills and financial acumen to diversify and expand their sales and foster peer-to-peer connections to improve financial and sales management confidence.

LFPP is awarding \$14.1 million in fiscal year 2024 funding to [43 projects](#) across 29 states and territories. The program supports local and regional food businesses that engage as intermediaries in indirect producer to consumer marketing. The awarded projects focus on activities, such as supporting the processing, aggregation, distribution, and storage of local and regional food products; developing value-added products; and facilitating regional food chain coordination.

**Project Highlight:**

- In Her Shoes, Inc. in Webb, Miss., is receiving a LFPP grant to enhance the sustainability of small farms as well as rural and underserved communities' access to fresh produce in the Mississippi Delta. Their project will provide support and training to more than 30 small, locally owned and operated farm businesses and build a mobile produce market that connects farmers to other programs, such as USDA's [Local Food Purchase Assistance](#) program.

RFSP is awarding \$5.2 million to [10 partnerships](#) across 10 states. The program supports the development of relationships between local and regional food businesses and institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and governments to increase local and regional foods in institutional cafeterias and meal programs.

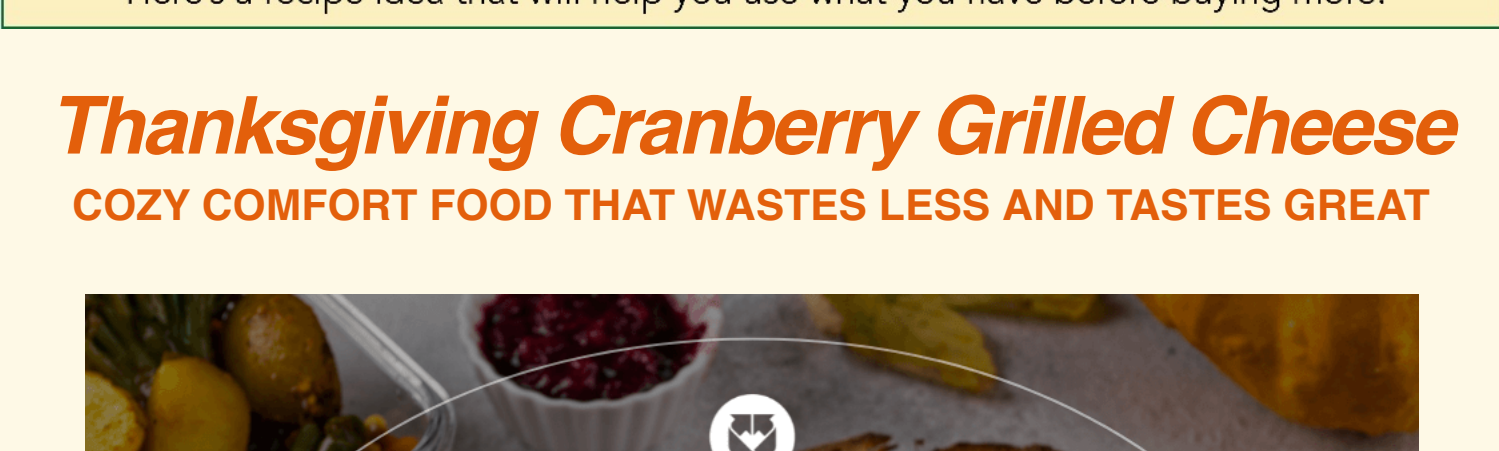
**Project Highlight:**

The Southeast Regional Cooperative in East Point, Ga. is receiving a RFSP grant to create a partnership that will engage food and agriculture businesses, non-profits, and universities to increase efficiency in the region's charitable food network. They will develop strategies to improve transportation management, middle of the supply chain logistics, value-added processing, and integrated data management, all of which will culminate in a regional service center.

LAMP and its accompanying grant programs are funded through the 2018 Farm Bill and FY2024 annual appropriations.

AMS supports U.S. food and agricultural product market opportunities, while increasing consumer access to fresh, healthy foods through applied research, technical services, and congressionally funded grants. These projects will support the development, coordination and expansion of direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local and regional food markets and enterprises and value-added agricultural products.

To learn more about AMS's investments in enhancing and strengthening agricultural systems, visit [www.ams.usda.gov/grants](http://www.ams.usda.gov/grants).



### Thanksgiving Cranberry Grilled Cheese

COZY COMFORT FOOD THAT WASTES LESS AND TASTES GREAT



ReFED estimates that Americans will throw away a staggering 316 million pounds of food on Thursday. With a well-thought-out shopping list, a fridge or freezer ready to store ingredients and leftovers, and a great meal plan, we can all take action to reduce Thanksgiving food waste. But when the best-laid plans still result in lots of leftovers, turn them into something crave-worthy and memorable.

**USES UP** Turkey & Cranberries  
**MAKES** 4 Servings

**INGREDIENTS**

- 8 slices of crusty bread (sourdough, or leftover rolls as sliders)
- Sliced turkey
- 8 slices of cheese, preferably muenster, havarti, or brie
- Spinach or spring mix
- Spicy mustard
- Leftover cranberry sauce or relish
- Butter

**DIRECTIONS**

- Lightly butter one side of each slice of bread.
- Layer the turkey, cheese, greens, mustard, and cranberry sauce between the slices.
- Toast in a pan on medium heat until the cheese melts and the bread is golden.

*From ReFED Executive Director Sara Burnett*

## FOOD STORAGE TIPS FROM SAVETHEFOOD.COM

### DAIRY, EGGS

**BUTTER**

**REFRIGERATE IT:** Yes **AT FRESHEST:** Opened, about 3 weeks; unopened, 2 months; freezer, up to 9 months

**OPTIMAL STORAGE:** Keep reserves in the freezer. Butter can be kept at room temperature if it will be used up within several days, but only if kept out of the light. If used only occasionally, store in the refrigerator in its original packaging and in the cooler parts of the refrigerator (the top and middle shelves near the back). Butter readily absorbs strong odors and flavors from its surroundings; additional wrapping or storing in a closed container (bag or butter dish) can help prevent this.

Clarified butter or "ghee" keeps three times longer than other butters because the milk solids (which cause butter rancidity) have been removed. Clarified butter is good for cooking but not for use as a spread. It will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 3 months.

**FREEZING:** For the best results, freeze fresh butter in its original carton within a zip-top freezer bag.

**USE IT UP/REVIVAL:** The translucent dark yellow patches on the surface of butter are simply spots that have been exposed to air and dried out. Eat them or scrape off. Save butter wrappers to grease pans or separate homemade burger patties. Store each wrapper, folded onto itself, in the freezer in an airtight container, and use as needed.

**CHEESE, HARD**

**REFRIGERATE IT:** Yes **AT FRESHEST:** 1 to 10 months, depending on the cheese

**OPTIMAL STORAGE:** Buy small amounts of cheese. Cheese is best stored loosely wrapped in wax paper or parchment paper to allow it to breathe, which likely means rewrapping it once you get it home to get it out of plastic wrapping. Wrapping it tightly in plastic traps moisture, thus encouraging growth of bacteria and mold. Store in the refrigerator drawer, if possible, to reduce the chance that the cheese will absorb other flavors. For best taste, allow to warm to room temperature before serving (unless it's extremely warm out).

**FREEZING:** Grate or cube before freezing, then seal into a zip-top freezer bag. Thaw in the refrigerator and use soon thereafter; the texture may be compromised, so plan to use for cooking and baking rather than straight eating.

**USE IT UP/REVIVAL:** If hard cheese develops a blue-green mold on the exterior, remove 1/2 in/12 mm below the mold; the remainder will be fine. Use rinds of hard cheeses to flavor soups and stews.

**CHEESE, SOFT**

**REFRIGERATE IT:** Yes **AT FRESHEST:** 1 to 4 weeks, depending on the cheese

**OPTIMAL STORAGE:** Buy small amounts of cheese. Cheese is best stored loosely wrapped in wax paper or parchment paper to allow it to breathe, which likely means rewrapping it once you get it home to get it out of plastic wrapping. Wrapping it tightly in plastic traps moisture, thus encouraging growth of bacteria and mold. Store in the refrigerator drawer, if possible, to reduce the chance of the cheese absorbing other flavors. Strong-smelling cheeses should be wrapped and placed in an airtight container to avoid having their flavor absorbed into other foods. For best taste, allow to warm to room temperature before serving (unless it's extremely warm out).

**FREEZING:** Cheese can be frozen but may become crumbly and lose flavor, and is therefore best used in cooking when thawed. Cube before freezing for ease of use. Very soft cheeses such as Brie will not freeze at all that well.

**USE IT UP/REVIVAL:** Soft cheeses with blue or green molds (that are not intentional as in blue cheese) should be discarded. Take care with unpasteurized cheeses, which carry food safety risks and are not recommended for populations at higher risk for food-borne illness. Rinds of soft cheeses can often be eaten. Whip small amounts of leftover soft cheeses together with some olive oil to create a delicious whipped cheese dip.

**COTTAGE CHEESE**

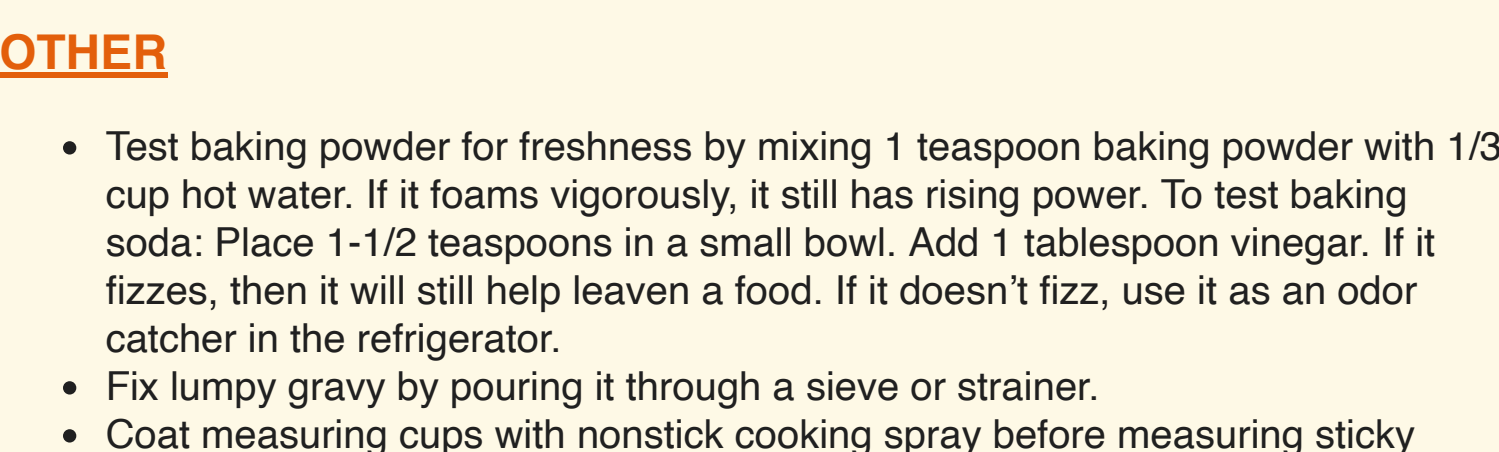
**REFRIGERATE IT:** Yes **AT FRESHEST:** Unopened, up to 10 days; opened, 7 days

**OPTIMAL STORAGE:** Closed container in the refrigerator.

**FREEZING:** Not recommended, although dishes that include cottage cheese as an ingredient may be frozen.

**USE IT UP/REVIVAL:** Substitute for ricotta cheese in lasagna. Cottage cheese can be used in place of cream cheese or ricotta cheese in dips, casseroles, pancakes, and desserts. Process in a blender if you prefer a smoother texture. Add cottage cheese to custards, pasta sauces, egg dishes, cheesecakes, and all sorts of recipes where cheese or milk would normally be used.

## Quick Tricks! Brought To You By:



**QUICK TRICKS**

Food tossed is money lost. One way to add new life to still edible foods is to re-purpose leftovers and reuse them in new ways and new recipes. This booklet will get you started with simple tips and recipes. You'll find "recycled" can taste just as good, maybe even better than the original recipe.

Alice Henneman, MS, RDN Extension Educator

**DAIRY**

- Freeze Parmesan rinds and add (frozen) to a soup or stew for extra flavor.
- Use up extra odds and ends of cheese by shredding them with a grater or in a food processor. Mix in your choice of ingredients, cut or chopped into small pieces (i.e. olives, pickles, pimientos, chives, walnuts, peppers, etc.). Add enough mayonnaise (regular or low-fat) to bind the ingredients together. Spread on your favorite bread.
- Use vanilla and fruit flavored yogurts as a dressing for fruit salads.

**COMBINATIONS OF FOODS**

- Make a chopped salad with small amounts of fruits, vegetables, nuts, cooked eggs, etc.
- Combine leftover pasta with foods such as boiled egg wedges or slices, bite-sized chunks of cheese, chopped fresh vegetables, Pasta salad, cooked dry beans. Mix with your favorite vinaigrette-type dressing. Refrigerate about an hour before serving to let the flavors blend.
- Create a colorful parfait by layering cookie crumbles, then pudding follow by fruit - such as berries - in parfait or wine glasses. Alternate as desired. Serve soon after preparation to prevent crumbles from becoming soggy.

**OTHER**

- Test baking powder for freshness by mixing 1 teaspoon baking powder with 1/3 cup hot water. If it foams vigorously, it still has rising power. To test baking soda: Place 1-1/2 teaspoons in a small bowl. Add 1 tablespoon vinegar. If it fizzes, then it will still help leaven a food. If it doesn't fizz, use it as an odor catcher in the refrigerator.
- Fix lumpy gravy by pouring it through a sieve or strainer.
- Coat measuring cups with nonstick cooking spray before measuring sticky ingredients like honey and syrups.
- Add oil, vinegar, herbs and spices to an almost-empty mayo, jam or jelly jar. Shake and use for a quick salad dressing. Use about 1 part vinegar to 3 parts oil.
- Fix lumpy frosting by adding something lumpy to it, such as chopped nuts or coconut.

For more waste reducing tips, go to: [www.food.unl.edu/book-1-quick-documents/make-over-your-leftovers.pdf](http://www.food.unl.edu/book-1-quick-documents/make-over-your-leftovers.pdf)

Learn more about food loss and waste prevention at [www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste](http://www.usda.gov/foodlossandwaste).

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