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REDUCE FOOD WASTE (AND WAIST) OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON

The AMA is encouraging people to be mindful about what they eat over the festive season and to also try reducing their food waste.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the festive season is all about family, friends, and fun, but much of the Christmas tradition is also concerned with food.

“Food and festivity are core to our celebrating with friends, and go back to times long forgotten in many of our cultural descendants,” Dr Bartone said.

“It is not uncommon, however, for people to eat excessive amounts of food over Christmas, which has a range of consequences.

“Certainly, do indulge in some of those treats and festive foods, but moderation should be the key. Sensible decisions should not be seen as foreign Scrooge-like concepts.

“The data suggests that many of us are slowly getting heavier. But the increase in weight is not consistent throughout the year.

“Splurges on food, confectionery, and alcohol over the festive season are likely to make a significant contribution to weight gain.

“It is also a time of year when many people take a break from their regular physical activity, which further contributes to weight gain.

“Overeating is not only bad for our health, it is also a significant contributor to food waste. People like to see an abundance of food on the table at Christmas, but unfortunately much of this excess food is destined for the bin and then for landfill.”

Dr Bartone added that people hosting Christmas events often over-cater. He said this encourages their guests to eat more than they normally would, and it also results in increased food waste.

There is a range of things people can do to avoid wasting food over the holidays, including:

- Not over-catering festive events (recognising that people tend to eat more food when palatable food is readily available).
- Storing leftovers appropriately and using them for another meal.
- Checking use-by dates. Plenty of food is thrown out prematurely.
- Reducing reliance on convenience or takeaway foods.
- Checking what is already in the fridge and pantry before going shopping.
- Avoiding buying too much food.
- Not going shopping while you are hungry.
- Aiming to purchase fruits and vegetables when they are in season. Pre-prepared fruits and vegetables may be more convenient, but they often have a shorter shelf life.
- If hosting a larger corporate event over Christmas, which is likely to have leftover food, get in touch with organisations like OzHarvest who can redirect this food to those who can use it.

Background

- Australians regularly discard about 20 per cent of their food purchases.
 - This equates to one in five shopping bags going in the bin, or \$3,800 worth of groceries wasted per household each year.
 - The Government estimates that food waste costs the Australian economy \$20 billion each year.
 - Food waste generates methane.
 - It also wastes precious resources such as water and the fuel used in logistics and transport.
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