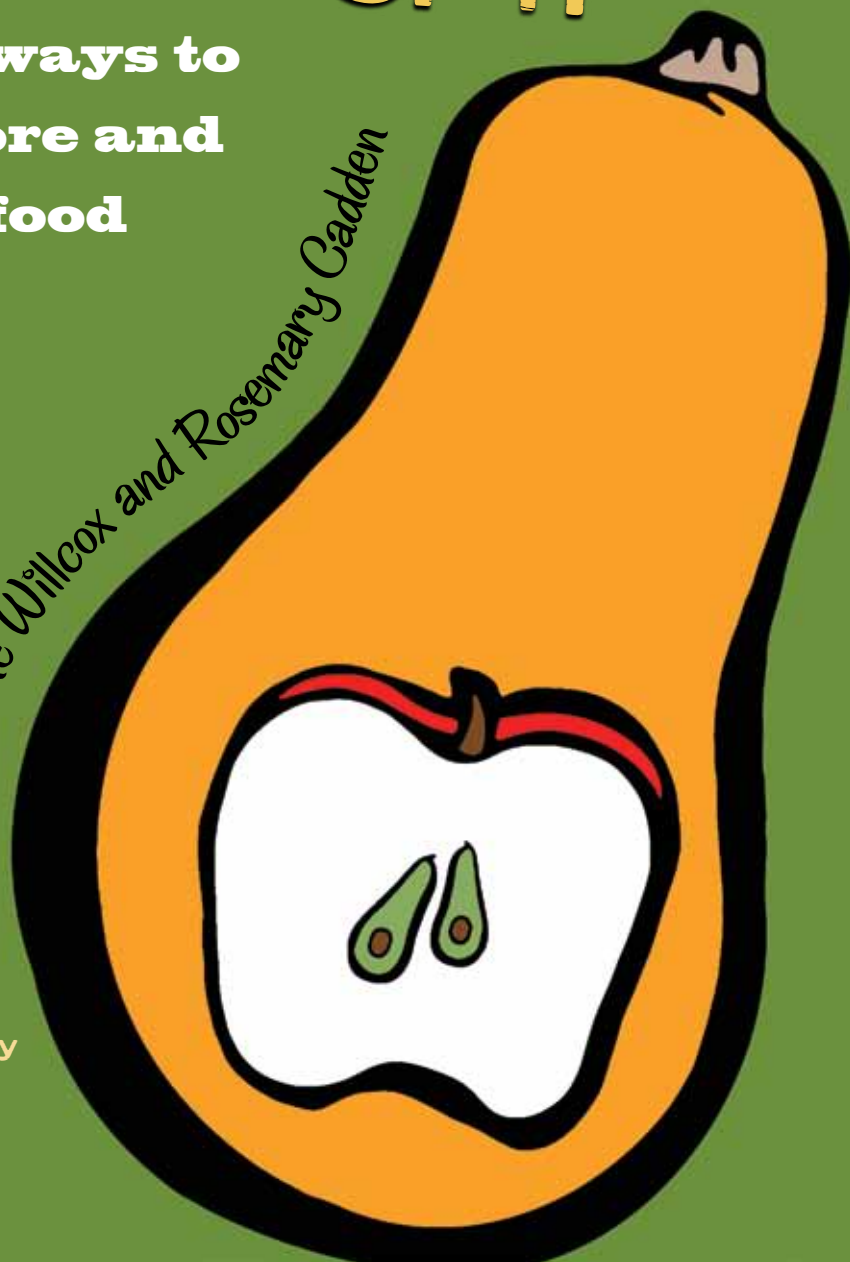


MAKING A MEAL OF IT



**Smart ways to
buy, store and
use up food**

Jane Willcox and Rosemary Cadden



'An essential
guide for every
household.'

INDIRA NAIDOO

Wakefield Press

Making A Meal Of It

When Rosemary Cadden and Jane Willcox met 25 years ago, Rosemary was impersonating a haggis. Food has been a big part of their relationship ever since.

They later shared their first meal when they found themselves sitting at the same table at a publicity junket while working as journalists for the *Advertiser* newspaper in Adelaide. Although they went in different directions – Rosemary into media relations and Jane to Sydney and into television – they have worked together on projects over the years, including the pilot for a TV series on cooking in Aboriginal communities that never got off the ground.

Jane admits to devouring ‘food porn’ while Rosemary’s passion is ‘waste not, want not’. Both appreciate the importance of doing their bit for the planet and reducing their food bills. Most of all they share a love of eating.





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Wakefield
Press

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Preface

Two black bananas, one sad carrot, a bunch of slimy coriander and half a loaf of stale bread. That's how this book began; with a quick list of the food about to go to waste in our homes. Talking on the phone one day about how much perfectly good food people throw away, we headed into our respective kitchens to see which of us was the worst waster. Let's just say we called it a draw. And that's when we decided to write this book.

In the months that followed, we got a buzz out of using up food and enjoyed trying out different ideas. We loved the extra money in our pockets and, yes, felt just a little smug about our budding environmental credentials.

We spoke to family and friends; we scoured second-hand bookshops for old-fashioned recipes and researched organisations worldwide that focus on avoiding food waste. We even conducted a survey to find out more about what people discard and how they feel about it.

This book is the best of what we've learnt. Full of tips, ideas and simple recipes, it's a users guide to making the most of the food we feel most guilty about throwing away. How to buy the best, keep it fresh, and make use of every bit – and, when you forget, how to restore and revive. The ideas are simple and flexible, from reinventing leftovers to fast recipes that take advantage of a bulk buy or a garden harvest. You'll not only save time and money but a bit of the planet too.

If you cook, you can use this book. It's for ordinary, busy people, not greenies in mud huts or gourmet cooks with all the latest gadgets. While the TV chefs constantly extol the virtues of using only the freshest produce, we think you can often produce a really tasty meal from odd bits and pieces of less than perfect ingredients.

We wanted to make the book fun to read too, so you'll find lots of useful tips as well as anecdotes and snippets that surprised us, things like:

- ▶ Why you shouldn't store zucchinis in the fridge. (And how to tell if they're suffering from it.)
- ▶ Turning leftover mashed potato into a strudel cake (and many many more things.)
- ▶ Why you shouldn't put a vase of flowers near the fruit bowl.
- ▶ Useful things to do with those squeezed orange and lemon cups.

And we answer questions like:

- ▶ Which food – not meat, fish or dairy – is the main cause of food poisoning in the home?
- ▶ Is it safe to eat the green bits on your potato?
- ▶ Why do apes peel their bananas from the other end?
- ▶ Which everyday vegetable is healthier cooked than raw?

A study by the Australia Institute estimates that for every five bags of food Australians buy, one is thrown out. The evidence is all too, well, evident: we don't buy sensibly, we don't store properly and we often don't know what to do with what's left over.

And we feel bad about it, too. Our waste survey, through SurveyMonkey, shows nearly 80 per cent of people feel guilty about throwing food away. Fruit and veg topped the list of what our survey participants threw out. Also frequently wasted were fresh herbs, breads, cakes and biscuits.

So what did all this research do to our own wasting habits and what might it do to yours? Well, we're not perfect and we still sometimes ignore our own best advice. But overall, we're definitely throwing out less. We buy more food on special and in bulk because we know we'll use it all up. That means fewer trips to the supermarket. And we deliberately cook extra to create lovely leftover meals. We're more confident about buying different and interesting foods because we've got more than one way to eat them. It's been a ball writing this book and we hope you have just as much fun exploring its pages. So, go on . . .

- ▶ Take advantage of that bulk buy special offer.
- ▶ Reach to the back of the fridge for that solitary piece of fruit or veg.
- ▶ Look again at those bits you cut off and throw out.
- ▶ Spend less time shopping for food.
- ▶ Reduce the weekly food bill.
- ▶ Embrace those leftovers.

The Technical Stuff

.....

We've been arguing for weeks over whether anyone ever reads instructions. Everyone we've spoken to is convinced that we could quote a passage from 'Waltzing Matilda' and no one would give a monkey's! But, if you're honestly

interested in the nuts and bolts, or desperately in need of a little sleep . . . read on.

- ▶ We have used the term ‘sauté with a little oil’ – which we know is a tautology, as sauté means fry with a little oil. After much debate, we’ve erred on the side of the obvious.
- ▶ When it comes to baking, size often does matter. But nothing that a bit of extra heat or more time won’t fix if you don’t want to go out and buy a new model baking tin. This is our excuse for not giving you cooking temperatures and fobbing you off with terms like ‘moderate oven’. The little table below reveals all.
- ▶ Only the really thrifty – and serial killers – wash and hang out bits of plastic wrap to use again. So we recommend using reusable bags and containers. (Actually, we’re lying about the serial killers.)
- ▶ We adopt a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ attitude to salt and pepper. How much you add and what you add it to is your business. However, we felt it worth mentioning for dishes where salt is a vital ingredient.
- ▶ We feel pastry is a deeply personal thing too. What you do to create this marvel of modern kitchen architecture in the privacy of your own home is entirely up to you. But we do humbly suggest, if you’re using the store-bought stuff, to follow the instructions on the packet.
- ▶ Serving sizes, on the other hand, are basic public information – although not always helpful. We both tend to eat more than an average single serving and we hope we’re not alone! So how many people our dishes will serve depends on your appetite and how much food you’ve got to use up. But, as a general rule, most of our suggestions feed four (bird-like) people.

Oven temperatures

Description	Gas		Electric		Mark
	°C	°F	°C	°F	
Very slow	120	250	120	250	½
Slow	150	300	150	300	1–2
Moderately slow	160	325	170	340	3
Moderate	180	350	200	400	4
Moderately hot	190	375	220	425	5–6
Hot	200	400	230	450	6–7
Very hot	230	450	250	475	8–9



**Sweet and savoury ideas
to keep the doctor away**



Just because apples are popular (second only to bananas) doesn't mean we never waste them. In fact, it's part of the problem. Who hasn't brought home apples from the shop, only to find a couple going soft in the fridge?

Granny's Grannies

Granny Smith was a Sydney grandmother who discovered the new apple variety by accident. In the late 1860s, Maria Ann Smith was running an orchard with her husband in Ryde. One day she threw out the remains of French crab apples, grown in Tasmania. When seedlings sprouted, she decided to nurture them. We now know that the crab apples must have been cross-pollinated with another kind of apple which threw up a completely different, and delicious, variety. Maria showed her neighbours and they took up the tart new fruit and made it famous.

Poor old Granny Smith however died soon after the discovery and never saw how big her new apple was to become.

Buying

Check for crispness by flicking the apple with your fingernail and listening to the sound. The brighter and sharper, the crisper and fresher the apple. If you want to get really picky, the greener the stem usually means the fresher the apple.

One bad apple really can destroy the whole bunch. (This is because apples can contain a lot of the naturally occurring fruit-ripening gas, ethylene.) So, if you're buying in bulk, it's worth investigating the health of the entire bag.

Apples in cold storage are a bit like Walt Disney [there's an urban myth that his cryogenically frozen body lies under Disneyland]. The moment apples are taken out of storage they start 'breathing' again. Trouble is – they taste like a dead man. Greengrocer

Season: Look out for the different varieties as they come into season. During the summer, you're probably best buying other fruits.

The different varieties have overlapping seasons. These, in turn, may vary from state to state. Below is a rough guide.

Month and Variety	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Jonathan		Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail					
Royal Gala		Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail			
Golden Delicious			Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail
Red Delicious			Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail
Jonagold			Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail				
Fuji			Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail
Braeburn				Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail
Pink Lady	Avail	Avail		Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail
Granny Smith	Avail	Avail	Avail	Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail
Jazz				Picking	Avail	Avail						
Sundowner	Avail	Avail			Picking	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail	Avail

Thanks to Apple and Pear Australia for this availability chart.

Storing

Turns out, you can't compare apples with apples. Different varieties have different storage lives. Granny Smith and Fuji, for example, can be stored for three to four weeks in the fridge – twice as long as most other varieties – while Red Delicious are best eaten within a few days of buying. This is because Granny Smith and Fuji give off less ethylene. (It also means that if you're putting an apple in a bag to help ripen another fruit, like an avocado, you'd be better off using another variety.)



Fresh ain't always fresh

Sadly most apples we buy aren't fresh off the tree. Far from it. In 2008, a Sydney newspaper tested a very small sample and found that supermarket apples were up to 10 months old. The secret was out. Apples go straight from the orchard into cold storage. (It was our fault, according to the supermarkets, for wanting the fruit all year round.) The apples were tested by an independent laboratory. Their scientist stated cold storage can keep apples at a good quality for up to six months.

Whole: In the fridge, in a plastic bag with a few holes. This prevents sweating which can lead to mould.

Cut: Keeps better in the fridge. Sprinkling the cut surface with citrus juice, like lemon or orange, stops the apple from going brown without making it sour. It won't last any longer though.

Freezing: Good, if you scald first. Slice, plunge into boiling water then iced water. Pat dry and store in serving sizes. Lasts months but is really only useful for cooked dishes.

Cooked: Apple sauce keeps well for a few days in the fridge. It also freezes for months. Most dishes containing apple freeze well.

WASTE WARRIOR TIP

Someone has peeled the apples. (Not you, naturally.) Now you have a pile of apple peel; perfectly decent food you don't want to chuck in the compost.

Don't panic. Sauté in butter and your fave spices – cinnamon, nutmeg or cloves – and sweeteners – sugar, honey or golden syrup – for a sweet snack.

What can't be improved with sugar and fat?

Using

How much

1 medium apple = 150 grams
= ¾ cup chopped
= ½ cup apple sauce

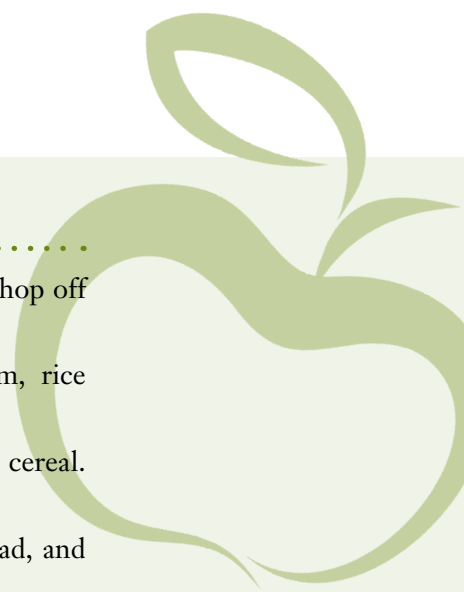
Try to leave the skin on. It's got two-thirds of the dietary fibre and most of the antioxidants i.e. the good stuff. At the very least, don't bother to peel for apple sauce. If you cook it for long enough, it disappears. Honestly.

Using Up

One Aged Apple

Don't throw out half an apple or even an ageing one. Chop off the bad bits and eat the rest.

- ▶ **DESSERT.** Grate and mix through soft ice-cream, rice pudding or custard with a sprinkle of cinnamon.
- ▶ **PORRIDGE.** Grate into porridge or over breakfast cereal. Try a sprinkle of cinnamon.
- ▶ **SALAD.** Grate into coleslaw, pear and parmesan salad, and any ham-based or smoked fish salads.
- ▶ **SALSA.** Chop and add to finely sliced Spanish onion and tomato. Serve with fish.
- ▶ **SANDWICH.** Grate onto a ham and seeded-mustard sandwich.
- ▶ **SAUCE.** Combine $\frac{1}{2}$ apple, grated, with 4 teaspoons horseradish cream, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise, 1–2 tablespoons sour cream and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Dijon mustard. Great with fish, veal and pork. Also spread on hotdogs and sausages.
- ▶ **STUFFING.** Add an apple to your onions when preparing stuffing. It goes well with poultry and lamb (see p. 37).
- ▶ **ZUCCHINI SLICE.** Apple combines well with zucchini. Replace one of the zucchinis in our slice (see p. 225).



HANDY HINT

Apple adds a subtle sweetness to savoury dishes like casseroles, curries and soups. Chop and add to lamb curry, sausage and bean casserole, and pumpkin soup. There's an apple in the coconut curry (see p. 71) and in the curried soup (see p. 76).

CLOUDY BETTER THAN CLEAR

Dutch researchers have found that cloudy apple juice contains significantly more antioxidants than clear juice. They think this is because of less processing. Of course, you get the most antioxidants out of apples by simply eating them whole!

A Couple of Ageing Apples

- ▶ **ASIAN SIDE DISH.** Fry slices in butter with a few drops of sesame oil to team up with Asian-style beef.
- ▶ **BAKED.** You can forget how easy and good this is. Core, peel and stuff the cavity with dried fruit, nuts, butter, muesli and sugar or honey. Pour a little water over the apples, cover and bake in a hot oven for 30–40 minutes.
- ▶ **CHICKEN SIDE DISH.** Fry slices in butter with chopped thyme or tarragon. Add a splash of white wine and lemon juice. Serve with chicken and pork.
- ▶ **COOKED SALAD.** Slice and fry a couple of apples in butter for a few minutes until they colour. Add to ½ shredded cabbage, ½ cup roughly chopped walnuts and ⅓ cup of sultanas. Dress with ½ cup vinegar (apple works well), ⅓ cup oil, 2 tablespoons each honey and mustard. **If you have it:** Add slices of mozzarella and ham.
- ▶ **CURRY.** Sauté 1 onion in a little oil, add a couple of crushed cloves of garlic, a 3-centimetre knob grated ginger and 1 tablespoon curry powder. Add 400 g can tomatoes, 2 sliced apples and 400 g can chickpeas. Add sugar to taste. Simmer until apples soften. Serve with a squeeze of lemon and a sprinkle of coriander.
- ▶ **SMOOTHIE.** Blend with skin on but core removed. Add milk, ice-cream or yoghurt and a sprinkle of cinnamon.
- ▶ **TARTE TARTIN.** If you have a frypan that you can throw in the oven, the rest is easy. Sauté butter and sugar until it starts to colour and caramelize. Fill pan with chunky sliced apples, cook gently until they start to soften. Cool. Cover with a sheet of puff pastry just a bit too big for the pan so you can tuck in the sides. Bake in moderately hot oven for 35 minutes or until pastry is golden. Rest 10 minutes and turn upside down.

Too Many Ageing Apples

- ▶ **EASY CHUTNEY.** It gets two ticks. One, you don't have to cook it forever and two, you don't have to sterilise anything. It keeps in the fridge for a week – getting better by the day – and is great with ham and cheese sandwiches. Sauté 2 onions and 2 tablespoons minced ginger in a little oil. Add 6 chopped apples, 1 cup vinegar, 1 cup apple juice and 1–2 teaspoons salt depending on taste. Cook for about 30 minutes or until the liquid is reduced. Makes 3 cups. **Second helpings:** Add 2 cups cooked chicken and throw into a precooked pastry base for chicken and apple pie.
- ▶ **APPLE SAUCE.** Core, chop and cook to mush. It's that easy. You can add sugar or lemon juice if you like. Keeps in fridge for a few days and freezes beautifully – or use in the following recipes.

Biscuits. Combine 1 cup self-raising flour, 1 cup quick oats, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar and 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Add 1 cup apple sauce, 2 lightly beaten eggs, 1 cup raisins, 1 cup chopped nuts, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable oil (mild flavour, not olive) and 1 teaspoon vanilla essence. Roll tablespoons of mixture into balls and flatten with the back of a fork. Bake in moderately hot oven for 8–10 minutes.

Ham glaze. Combine 1 cup apple sauce with a couple of teaspoons of mustard and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey and spread over a leg of ham.

Mega-easy apple cake. Combine 1 cup cold stewed apples (about 2 apples), 150 grams melted butter (not hot), 1 cup sugar, 2 eggs, 2 cups self-raising flour, 2 teaspoons baking powder, 2 teaspoons cinnamon and 1 teaspoon nutmeg. Stir until well combined. Pour into 30 cm cake tin. Bake in slow oven for 45–60 minutes, maybe longer.

Sweetener. Instead of sugar, dollop apple sauce into curries and tomato sauces.

EQUIPMENT ALERT

Baking apples? Buy a corer. It's only a few bucks and worth it. Using a knife is a pain in the backside. It can be done but life is too short. Really.
