



ARTS & CULTURE

US Restaurants, Companies 'Upcycle' Leftover Food

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Tyler Malek is the head ice cream maker at the Portland, Oregon-based Salt & Straw.

He uses leftover yogurt to make his lemon curd ice cream. For chocolate barley milk, he mixes leftovers of rice and grains used to make beer to give it a creamy taste.

“Instead of calling this food waste, we need to call it wasted food and start decreasing how much wasting we’re doing,” Malek said.

Malek’s ice cream company is among those at the start of a movement called upcycling. It is a process of creating high-quality products from leftover food.

The movement is gaining ground as buyers want to know what is in their food, where their food comes from, and how it affects the environment.

The Upcycled Food Association said more than 31 million metric tons of food are wasted every year in the U.S. The organization estimated that waste makes up about 40 percent of the country’s food production, costing the national economy more than \$200 billion.

Upcycled food is becoming increasingly common in food products like cake mixes and veggie chips at natural food stores. Others include fruits and vegetables that are rejected by restaurants and food stores because of their shape or color.

The Upcycled Food Association gives out an official “Upcycling Certified” **seal** to qualifying products. These seals, found on the new Salt & Straw ice cream, bring attention to buyers that this company is upcycling food.

The organization approved 30 food products in 2021 to carry the seal. But now, 450 different products have received the marker.

Angie Crone is the organization's chief executive. She said outdated guidelines led to a lot of wasted and uneaten food. Crone added, "So this is a mark that you can see on the products wherever you go **shopping**, to be able to understand how that company is reducing food waste..."

The organization's marker is also found on all products made by Renewal Mill. The Oakland, California-based company is turning leftover food products from plant-based milk into food products like flour to reduce waste at the manufacturing level.

Caroline Cotto, the company's founder said, "And then we use that flour to make things like baking mixes and ready-to-eat cookies." Its flour is also used in Salt & Straw's new "Salted Caramel & Okara Cupcakes" ice cream.

The movement is not limited to recycled products found in ice cream stores, farmers' markets, or natural food stores. In San Francisco, a restaurant is now serving pizza and wine with upcycled food such as ugly mushrooms and discolored tomatoes.

I'm Gregory Stachel.

Haven Daley reported this story for The Associated Press. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

seal – *n.* an official mark that is stamped on paper or on a small piece of wax to show that something (such as a document) is genuine and has been officially approved

shop – *v.* to visit places where goods are sold in order to look at and buy things

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