

SUMMER TRAVEL GUIDE! THE HOTTEST NEW GETAWAYS PG 134

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The Zero-Waste Dinner

The San Diego Food System Alliance's Re:Source dinner sheds light on how much damn food we waste

By Troy Johnson

The stats on food waste are staggering. Almost 40 percent of food in the U.S. is never eaten. In 2010, America wasted 33.79 million tons of food. That's enough to fill the Empire State Building 91 times. If the U.S. wasted just 5 percent less food, we could feed 4 million people.

When you consider that one in six Americans face hunger on a daily basis, the stats seem grotesque, if not cruel.

There are many causes: preparing too much food and not eating the leftovers; throwing out food past its "use by" or "best by" date; badly prepared food, etc. But one of the more vapid and ridiculous reasons is that supermarkets refuse to sell "ugly" fruits and vegetables.

"Food waste is near and dear to my heart," says Red Door owner Trish Watlington. "My mom was raised in the Depression. She had the ethic of 'you can't waste anything, because we don't have anything.' In Europe, you only use what you have. We have gotten so far from that as a society. Fortunately for me, our chef Miguel Valdez grew up the same way in a poor family, so he learned to make something out of nothing."

"Ugly" food, and food waste overall, were the driving ideas behind April's inaugural "Re:Source" dinner at

Watlington's Mission Hills restaurant (Carlsbad's The Land & Water Co. hosted last month and Café Gratitude will take the baton June 21). The four-course dinner used perfectly good food that would otherwise have gone to waste, brought awareness to the issue, and raised more than \$1,100 for the San Diego Food System Alliance, an organization that works to build healthy, sustainable food systems in San Diego.

Also involved was Kitchens for Good, a catering company and culinary education program. "Their catering menus are predominantly made using food 'waste' that's donated," Watlington says, "like crates of oranges that have fallen from trees."

She served unused food such as pastry scraps from Cardamom Cafe, and bananas from Whole Foods Del Mar. "You'd be amazed at what the markets throw away because the fruit or vegetable is bruised or cracked. That food is perfectly fine. You

could cut around the bruise, or put them into dessert or applesauce."

How else can the average joe waste less food? Buy from farmers' markets. "Standard size doesn't apply at farmers' markets. For fruits and veggies to go to the grocery store, they have to be a standard size, or they go in the trash. Plus, when we buy from local farmers, that helps them get agricultural subsidies." Suddenly, saving ugly fruit sounds like a beautiful idea. ●

"One of the more vapid and ridiculous reasons for food waste is that supermarkets refuse to sell 'ugly' fruits and vegetables."

THE CHARITABLE GIVING GUIDE

CALENDAR

■ **June 2, 2016**
129TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
San Diego Center for Children

■ **June 2, 2016**
16TH ANNUAL GRANTS CELEBRATION
San Diego Women's Foundation

■ **June 6, 2016**
DREAM ON 2016 CONCERT GALA
Promises2Kids

■ **June 11, 2016**
RAGIN' CAJUN BAYOU BLOWOUT
Meals on Wheels Greater San Diego, Inc.

■ **June 18, 2016**
RITZ: RENDEZVOUS IN THE ZOO
San Diego Zoo Global

■ **June 21, 2016**
UNITED WAY DAY OF ACTION
United Way

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