

Ugly Fruits & Vegetables

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Ripe for change

Climate change and proper use of resources are among the most pressing subjects of our time. Food waste becomes an important part of this global issue, as \$31 billion worth of food is wasted in Canada alone, leading to significant economic, environmental and social consequences. One of the ways of minimizing the use of resources, as well as the overall amount of organic waste that ends up in our landfills and adds to greenhouse gas emissions, is to reconsider our cosmetic standards when it comes to produce. A local volunteer group that tackles food waste called FoodSharing Ottawa, would like to encourage just that.

Unfortunately, stringent beauty ideals are successfully marketed not just for humans, but also the fruits and vegetables that we consume. Rigid guidelines have led shoppers to become accustomed to visually flawless and perfectly uniform produce from our grocery stores. But nature is not perfect. Yet size, shape, colour and other attributes that often make no difference to the taste or nutritional value of produce

result in a fifth to a third of each harvest that Canadian farmers are simply unable to sell.

But there is no reason to think that a small cucumber, a slightly blemished apple, or a tomato with a bulbous nose are somehow superior to their more picture-perfect counterparts. Increased consumption of these products is simply good practice. It ensures that resources such as water and labour aren't wasted on growing food that will never be consumed by humans. It drives down the overall cost of groceries and keeps local farmers in business, as they are able to sell more of their produce. It allows more people to be able to afford and have access to nutritious food. And it results in more sustainable, environmental friendly practices overall.

