



Whether it is because we are suckers for gluttony or incapable of calculating how much we will need to feed our family and friends for the annual Christmas feast, every year British household shamelessly end up chucking away a mountain of surplus festive food. We shop, we eat some of it and bin the rest. Much of it could be re-used and such enormous waste is drain on the environment as well as our finances.

Figures published on Thursday reveal the shocking extent of our thoughtlessness. We throw out the equivalent of 2 million turkeys, 5m Christmas puddings and a truly shocking 74m mince pies, according to the Love Food Hate Waste campaign run by the government's waste reduction advisory body, Wrap. To put it into context, that means we are binning nearly twice as many mince pies as retail giant Marks & Spencer sells every year (40m).

With a total Christmas food bill averaging a huge £169 per household and over a third (35%) of us admitting to throwing away more food at Christmas than at any other time of year, Love Food Hate Waste has partnered with Unilever to help 12 families across the UK to cut down on their food waste in the run up to and over Christmas. The families are aiming to slash the amount of food they throw away by a quarter and cut their grocery bills by 15%.

The partnership's 12 top tips aim to help people make the most of leftovers and store food cleverly in the run up to Christmas. Some are straight from the ministry of the blindingly obvious, such as freezing leftover cheese or using cooked sprouts to make bubble and squeak. Genius. Some recipes feature Flora spread and Hellman's mayonnaise (Unilever, ahem, make both).

But isn't it time that we cut the obscene amount of food waste which has become a fixture of this time of year, planning our shopping and cooking more carefully? Let's face it, many supermarkets will re-open on Boxing Day and we are hardly going to suffer if we don't have

enough mince pies.

Social pressures and glossy TV advertisements from supermarkets mean that often we feel we have no choice but to be over-generous and put on a massive spread that we know we are not going to eat.

Kathy Cope, a 39-year-old mother of two who lives in Woolton Village, Liverpool, is taking part in the challenge. She says, "Christmas is definitely the most wasteful time of year for us. I overbuy because I want everything to be perfect. It's hard to get portions right and I don't want to appear stingy so I always cook far more than I need to."

And if your guilt buttons were not already firmly pressed, it's not just leftover turkey scraps you need to be worrying about. Britons will apparently pour 15 million cups of roast turkey fat down the kitchen sink on Christmas Day, enough to nearly fill an Olympic swimming pool.

New research from the University of Portsmouth has shed light on what happens to this fat once it enters sewers and transforms into a hard, soapy material. Scientists estimate removing fat, oil and grease from sewer pipes adds up to £50m a year to our household bills. Yuck.