

‘Ugly’ fruits, vegetables can help solve world hunger

By Elizabeth Royte, National Geographic

Tristram Stuart has 24 hours to produce a restaurant meal for 50 people—to plan a menu, gather food, then welcome guests to a venue in a city not his own. Complicating what sounds like a reality-show contest is a singular rule: Nearly all the ingredients must be sourced from farms and vendors intending to throw them out.

After racing back to New York City from a New Jersey farm where he gleaned 75 pounds of crookneck squash deemed by the farmers too crooked to sell, Stuart bolts from a car creeping through traffic and darts into a Greenwich Village bakery. Tall and blond, with a posh English accent, he launches into his ten-second spiel: “I run an organization that campaigns against food waste, and I’m pulling together a feast tomorrow made with food that won’t be sold or donated to charity. Do you have any bread that we could use?” The bakery doesn’t, but the clerk hands him two broken chocolate-chip cookies as consolation.

Across cultures, food waste goes against the moral grain. After all, nearly 800 million people worldwide suffer from hunger. But according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, we squander enough food—globally, 2.9 trillion pounds a year—to feed every one of them more than twice over. Where’s all that food—about a third of the planet’s production—going? In developing nations much is lost postharvest for lack of adequate storage facilities, good roads, and refrigeration. In comparison, developed nations waste more food farther down the supply chain, when retailers order, serve, or display too much and when consumers ignore leftovers in the back of the fridge or toss perishables before

they've expired.

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