

Food Waste | From Excess to Enough



Hesitance to share suboptimal food

Sharing food with others—either directly with someone nearby or indirectly through charities like food banks—has emerged as a viable strategy to combat food waste. However, scant work has investigated what and why people want to share with others in this context.

Across four online experiments and one lab experiment mimicking food donation context with real consequences (with a total of 1,368 participants), we found that people are less likely to share and donate food with suboptimal attributes that do not influence intrinsic quality than optimal food. This is because people anticipate that recipients will respond less positively to suboptimal than optimal food. In line with this idea, when this suboptimality is non-visible to recipients (e.g., presenting food in a processed form like tomato sauce), the reluctance to share suboptimal food can be reduced.

Furthermore, we also reveal a discrepancy between givers' anticipation of how recipients respond and recipients' actual responses. Specifically, recipients are less bothered by suboptimal food than givers anticipate,

suggesting room for encouraging more sharing of such food.

These findings reveal that food suboptimality and the anticipation of how it is perceived by recipients are barriers to sharing. Addressing these concerns could help facilitate the sharing of suboptimal food.



Source

Zhang, Y., van Herpen, E., Pandelaere, M., & Geuens, M. When sharing is scaring: Hesitance to share suboptimal food due to of negative responses from recipients. *Under review*.

