

## Too good for the garbage can: Against food waste



Worldwide about one third of all food ends up in the garbage, in Germany this is 18 million tons per year. Valuable resources flow into the production of food. Wasted food is responsible for about 10% of global greenhouse emissions. A large part of the food in private households ends up in the trash; on average, every German throws away 75 kg per year. However, many food products end up in the garbage can before

they end up in our shopping cart, for example because they do not meet the norm (e.g. crooked vegetables) or because they are not sold at all due to overproduction. We have become accustomed to having everything to choose from at any time. Customers expect to be able to choose from a variety of different baked goods ten minutes before the bakery closes.

This is where the "foodsharing" initiative ([www.foodsharing.de](http://www.foodsharing.de)) comes in, in which Sr. **Nathalie Korf CJ**, Frankfurt, MEP, is involved:

So-called food savers go into the cooperating companies after closing time and collect - "save" - what would otherwise be disposed of. They then distribute it further so that the food ends up in the stomach instead of in the garbage can. More than 7,500 companies now cooperate with foodsharing. More than 80,000 foodshavers are involved in more than 3,000 rescue operations a day. In this way, countless edible foods have already been saved. In the meantime, foodsharing is no longer only active in large cities, but new cooperations are also emerging in rural areas.



What does food rescue via foodsharing actually look like?

Sr. Nathalie gives us an insight into her commitment in a typical foodsharing week:



**Tuesday:** On the way back from work I stop at two bakeries. I put photos of the rescued baked goods into my WhatsApp group and hope that enough people have already shown interest in the 120 or so rolls, 20 loaves of bread, and the lye pastry on my way back. The smell in my car makes my stomach growl. At home the sisters are also happy about delicious grain or chili rolls for dinner.

I interrupt my dinner several times to hand out baked goods. Today four customers come. One of them comes here by train through half the city. She is not only happy about the rolls, but also about the "little chat" at the handover. I not only know her life situation with her joys and sorrows by now. The last person to arrive is the father of a young family. He always takes everything that is left over and his wife then distributes it in the neighborhood. Many people live there who have to get by with little money. I especially grant them the organic baked goods from the artisan baker.

**Friday:** In the early evening I meet three more food savers at the weekly market. We talk about who goes to which stall and then meet to divide the food. A passer-by notices us and asks who we are. I explain the concept of food sharing. He is enthusiastic. I pull my well-filled handcart home. Today we have peaches, grapes, carrots, salad,... - and green cabbage, which later turns out to be a "shop-keeper" and motivates me to improve my cooking skills. After a short break a new adventure starts: For the first time I collect the remaining food in restaurants in a shopping center.



One of my loyal customers accompanies me and holds the position at the handcart while I constantly bring her new containers filled with international delicacies. She later uses them to put together a lunch for the refugee girls of the girls' meeting, where she volunteers.



Meanwhile, in the WhatsApp group, it becomes clear that there are more interested girls than food, and I have to put some off until next time. My fellow sister is also hoping there will be a next time soon, and she is looking forward to Chinese food the next day, while I enjoy the delicious Indian curry and am happy that the freezer still has a portion to take to work.

**Sunday:** In the afternoon I drive to the branch of a self-service bakery where I am one of the two people responsible for the operation. We are the contact person for the branch manager and keep an eye on the work schedule. Today, however, I'm active in another role: I accompany a food-saver-to-be on her first introductory pick-up, clarify questions and give tips on the right equipment and distribution of food. I myself bring my share of the food to the Railroad Mission right after the pick-up, where the visitors love to eat the sandwiches and sweet pieces.

Apart from the community's own consumption (we hardly buy any baked goods anymore and like to cook with saved vegetables) it is my concern to bring the saved food to people who may need support. However, food sharing is not a charitable organization like the Tafel, but an environmental education organization that wants to draw attention to food waste and do something about it.

Every food saver is free to choose how to use the saved food; only throwing it away is of course taboo. Foodsharing is not a competition to organizations like the Tafel, but a supplement. In some companies both the Tafel and foodsharing are active, with the Tafel always taking precedence. Unfortunately, however, there is still much more overproduced food than all those active in the field together can save. Much remains to be done, because food does not belong in the garbage can, but in the stomach.

Text and photos: Sr. Nathalie Korf CJ