# Too Good To Go app saves millions of meals but sparks debate over food waste ethics



A woman sits in her kitchen, eagerly displaying the contents of her recent purchase from a food waste app. Her excitement is palpable; the discovery of a “mystery bag” filled with delicious offerings from a popular café feels akin to uncovering a rare fashion find. For just £3, she showcases a range of items—porridge, a croissant, and a savoury breakfast dish—full of anticipation and joy. Such scenes, increasingly popular on social media platforms like TikTok, depict the thrill of rescuing food that would otherwise go to waste, an ethos championed by Too Good To Go. Since its inception in Copenhagen in 2015, this app has aimed to tackle the staggering issue of food waste, estimated to account for one-third of global food production, all while offering consumers a unique and affordable shopping experience.

Too Good To Go has gained remarkable traction in the UK, boasting over 100 million registered users and more than 400 million meals saved worldwide, including 121 million in 2023 alone—a 46% increase from the previous year. With an annual food waste cost of approximately £22 billion in the UK, the app offers both environmental and economic incentives. Users simply purchase a mystery bag of surplus food and collect it within a specified time. During its evolution, the app has expanded, partnering with 175,000 retailers, ranging from supermarkets to independent cafés, providing a convenient solution to an escalating problem.

Sophie Trueman, Too Good To Go’s country director for the UK and Ireland, emphasises that the reduction of food waste represents a crucial mission for the company, asserting, “We believe that we cannot afford to waste food. It’s too valuable…” This commitment not only addresses economic factors but also highlights broader societal implications, given that millions globally struggle to secure adequate nutrition. The app's appeal lies in its dual nature: users relish the excitement of a mystery bag while contributing to a significant environmental cause, potentially avoiding over 328,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

However, as the app's popularity soars, challenges arise that could obscure its original mission. While many users celebrate saving food, some have voiced concerns over the integrity of its purpose. Experiences shared online reveal disappointments when orders do not meet expectations; for instance, one TikTok user lamented receiving an egg mayo sandwich, labelling it as wasteful. Critics argue that excitement around securing deals can detract from the app’s anti-waste narrative. Rackie, a dedicated user from Berkshire, highlighted the paradox, saying, “It sort of feels counterintuitive trying to save food waste… but then you’re spending money on petrol…”

This contradiction exemplifies a broader trend in the consumption of surplus food. Zoe Adjey, a senior lecturer in hospitality at the University of East London, notes that although consumers are eager to mitigate waste, companies often hesitate due to concerns about liability and food safety. Legal repercussions tied to foodborne illnesses create a formidable barrier, discouraging businesses, particularly larger chains, from distributing surplus food directly to those in need.

Despite these challenges, Too Good To Go has effectively transformed the narrative surrounding food waste. Once viewed as a last resort fraught with stigma, buying leftover food has become an act of environmental consciousness and savvy shopping. The company actively engages users by showcasing the tangible environmental benefits of their actions, encouraging them to track the cumulative carbon savings associated with their purchases.

As the landscape of food rescue continues to evolve, platforms like Too Good To Go stand at the forefront, reshaping societal perceptions and behaviours around food waste. The movement has spearheaded conversations about consumption and sustainability, illustrating that individuals, while seeking savings, can contribute meaningfully to a crucial global issue. While some may see the charm of the mystery bag as a novelty, the underlying principle remains clear: the fight against food waste is everyone’s responsibility. Ultimately, as Rackie articulates, “if the ultimate result is that food doesn’t get wasted, then that’s a good thing, however you get to that point.”

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-waste-apps-too-good-to-go-b2760717.html), [[2]](https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-us/about-food-waste)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-waste-apps-too-good-to-go-b2760717.html), [[4]](https://www.toogoodtogo.com/press/impact-report-2023)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-waste-apps-too-good-to-go-b2760717.html), [[5]](https://www.uncommonfood.com/too-good-to-go-revolutionizing-the-fight-against-food-waste/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-waste-apps-too-good-to-go-b2760717.html), [[6]](https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2024/food-waste-apps/803156)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-waste-apps-too-good-to-go-b2760717.html), [[3]](https://www.toogoodtogo.com/press/impact-report-2022)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-waste-apps-too-good-to-go-b2760717.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-us/about-food-waste> - This page from Too Good To Go explains the environmental impact of food waste, highlighting that a third of the world's food produced annually is discarded. It details how the app helps reduce CO₂ emissions, water usage, and land use by rescuing surplus food from going to waste.
3. <https://www.toogoodtogo.com/press/impact-report-2022> - Too Good To Go's 2022 Impact Report reveals that the company saved over 79 million meals from going to waste, marking a 50% increase from the previous year. The report also discusses initiatives like the 'Look, Smell, Taste, Don't Waste' campaign and the launch of Magic Parcels.
4. <https://www.toogoodtogo.com/press/impact-report-2023> - In its 2023 Impact Report, Too Good To Go announces saving over 121 million meals from waste, a 46% increase from 2022. The report highlights the environmental benefits, including avoiding 328,554 tonnes of CO₂ emissions and nearly 100 billion litres of water use.
5. <https://www.uncommonfood.com/too-good-to-go-revolutionizing-the-fight-against-food-waste/> - This article discusses Too Good To Go's global reach and growth, noting that as of 2024, the app has saved over 350 million meals and has over 100 million registered users. It also covers the company's initiatives like the 'Look, Smell, Taste, Don't Waste' campaign and Magic Parcels.
6. <https://www.triplepundit.com/story/2024/food-waste-apps/803156> - TriplePundit explores various food waste apps, including Too Good To Go, which has saved over 300 million meals since 2016. The article highlights the app's growth, with a 59% increase in meals saved from 2021 to 2022 and a 46% increase from 2022 to 2023.
7. <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/03/1202278468/climate-change-food-waste-too-good-to-go> - NPR discusses the environmental impact of food waste and how apps like Too Good To Go help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The article notes that food loss and waste account for about 6% of the U.S. total greenhouse gas emissions footprint.