

The firms being creative with food destined for the bin



A rising number of firms are finding creative uses for surplus food. But are consumers comfortable eating produce that would have otherwise ended up in the bin? On the surface there seems little that's different or unusual about Bean & Wheat, a deli and cafe hidden away in a cobbled alleyway close to Liverpool Street Station in London.

Adam Handling launched Bean & Wheat in June to use surplus food from the kitchen of his nearby restaurant, The Frog E1. The food is cooked from ingredients that would have otherwise been thrown away. The Masterchef finalist wanted to help reduce the around 199,000 tonnes of food waste produced each year by British restaurants, which he feels not only harms the environment but also "wastes money".

Bean & Wheat is just one of a rising number of companies tackling the issue of food waste, which sees a third of food produced for human consumption lost or wasted, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. That's equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes globally every year.

The overproduction of food, rules restricting the sale of discoloured produce, and an aversion to leftovers, despite them being perfectly fine to eat, are all to blame. And campaigners say that it also wastes water and worsens global warming as swelling landfills emit more greenhouse gasses.

Jenny Dawson Costa quit her job in the hedge fund industry in 2011 and launched Rubies in the Rubble, hoping to offer a "practical solution" to the problem. The British firm uses unwanted "ugly" fruit and veg from UK farms to make condiments, such as pink onion and chilli relish, banana ketchup and piccalilli. Its products are available in 500 stockists, including Waitrose, Selfridges and independent stores. Ms Dawson says that since she started, the public has become more aware about the issue of food waste and more open to eating surplus food. "Many consumers used to be put off by it and were worried about the quality but I think that's changing. Brands like ours are also showing it can be used in products that taste great," she adds, noting that her firm has won several awards.

Indeed, even major retailers are embracing the trend, with Tesco and Asda among those now stocking misshapen fruit and veg.

Suzanne Beame 377 words.¹

¹ Harm :hurt. Tackle : make an attempt. Leftovers : waste. Swelling landfills : décharges de + en + importantes.