

Guilty Greenie: Season 1, Episode 6 Getting Wasted

Cait Bagby: Hello and welcome to Guilty Greenie live here on Fireside from the Climate Collab auditorium. We are your imperfect host. I'm Cait Bagby,

Sarah Ferris: and I'm Sarah Ferris. And I don't know about you, but we're tired of perfectionism in trying to live more sustainably. Personally. I feel that if I'm not sipping on my home brew Kombucha out of a Shlurple I'm pooping all over this glorious planet.

So let's get real for a minute and focus on what we can achieve because no matter how cute and catchy the name you give a reusable straw is, and let's be honest Shlurple, buy a Shlurple, save a turtle is a great name. I'm not going to remember to bring it every time I need a straw and as for kombucha fermented toilet water. It's just not my thing. So join us as we bare all: we'll share our own guilt, share our own journeys and just add some levity in our attempts and fails to be more eco-friendly but in the real world. Right, Cait?

Cait Bagby: That's right but we are going to have to disagree on kombucha. It was a favorite of mine.

Sarah Ferris: Maybe I'm just making it wrong or actually I've never made it. Maybe I'm tasting it wrong. It varies from dirty water to flavored water. That's the spectrum for me on kombucha..

Cait Bagby: Oh, I think that's tea you're talking about. Tea is what you mean to say...

Sarah Ferris: No,

Cait Bagby: Join Sarah and I. We will be sharing our own journeys as Sarah mentioned, the good, the bad and the laughable. And today we are getting wasted. We are talking all about food loss and waste and how it is actually one of the biggest contributors to climate change.

Sarah Ferris: Right? Well, I've got a confession to make straight up because food waste, it's a complete blind spot of mine. My only baseline is probably washing out containers. I know I should be composting but I need some kind of motivation. So I need you to tell me why I should be doing it because it seems like such a faff.

Cait Bagby: Mm,

Sarah Ferris: It's on my bottom of my, can I be arsed list? I'm not going to lie.

Cait Bagby: I think it is for a lot of people. I don't really think food waste is something that's top of mind, except maybe those days you clean out your fridge or, and there's some very interesting, sociological studies, psychological studies that we can get into a little bit later

about how we think about food waste. Really fascinating, but let's put it in the context of climate change to start, how's that?

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, like that.

Cait Bagby: All right so annually global food loss and waste, and those are two different things. And we can, talk about that too, but globally loss and waste is the worlds third largest emitter of carbon dioxide. To put that into context, food waste is third only to the total greenhouse gas emissions of the United States and China.

Sarah Ferris: Okay, so it's big.

Cait Bagby: If it was a country it would be the third largest.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. Yeah. All right. Well, I'm listening up now. That's a good motivation. I'm in.

Cait Bagby: I think that hard to put into perspective though. Right?

Sarah Ferris: Yeah and also what does that actually mean? It's the third biggest, what'd you say carbon...

Cait Bagby: Global greenhouse gas emissions.

Sarah Ferris: Emissions, which is shocking. What is the effect of that on the world? What does that do?

Cait Bagby: Didn't, we do a show back to basics. Sarah, were you not paying attention about climate change?

Sarah Ferris: Call me out, call me out.

Cait Bagby: What I'm going to say to you is the same thing I would tell the audience, please listen to our episode of Back To Basics.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. I'm going to listen to it again. No, I just think it's important to sometimes link it back to something really tangible, like, you know, hole in the ozone layer.

Cait Bagby: Right? So essentially it's leading to rising temperatures, rising sea levels, which inevitably, and, uh, slightly, I guess, ironically is going to lead to food shortages, um, hunger or malnutrition, uh, Migration. Yeah. I mean,

Sarah Ferris: okay. So just essentially a global shit storm.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. Pretty much. That's, that's the polite way of putting it, I think.

Sarah Ferris: Mmhmm. All right.

Cait Bagby: If we want to talk about impact, let's break it down by countries and regions and overall, cause maybe that'll help provide some context to it. Okay. Let's start big, we'll work our way down. Globally around 923 million tons of food are lost or wasted. So to give a visual for that, that's enough to fill 23 million 40 ton trucks, or we would call them some semi trucks or 18 wheelers.

So 23 million, 40 ton trucks, and that's enough to circle the earth seven times bumper to bumper.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. Is that annually? Did you say?

Cait Bagby: Yes.

Sarah Ferris: All right. That is a lot.

Cait Bagby: Yep, and that equates to about \$1 trillion worth of food that's lost and wasted. There's a lot.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. And there's people starving.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. And we can talk about that too, about how just removing 15% from the lost and waste streams would actually feed well, well, we'll get to that. We'll get to that. Okay. So globally 923 million tons of food. In the United States, it's about 30 to 40% of all food produced is wasted and that works out to about 125 to 160 billion pounds every year, or about 20 pounds per person per month.

Sarah Ferris: That's insane. Isn't it? Is the U S one of the worst countries, or are there other countries that are worse?

Cait Bagby: The U S is one of the worst. The UK is around 32% of all food is wasted. So it's right up there with the United States. The difference is the scale in which food is produced. The United States is producing more food than the United Kingdom. So if it's 32% across the board for the UK and United States, it would still be more food lost or wasted in the United States.

Sarah Ferris: Are there any countries that are doing it right? Way lower on the percentages?

Cait Bagby: It's a difference in terms of where the food is being.. Where it's going to waste.

In higher income countries, food is most often wasted at the retailer or consumer level. So think at the store, a restaurant, or in your kitchen. In lower income countries, food waste primarily happens closer to the fields, closer to the actual production of food. And that is a lot in part to poor storage, poor transportation, as well as being at the mercy of weather.

Sarah Ferris: Right. That makes sense.

Cait Bagby: To kind of clarify that question a little bit more too North America, Europe and Asia, collectively waste, roughly around 222 million tons of food each year. Okay. So that's collectively. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa produce 230 million tons per year. So North America, Europe and Asia is wasting more food or roundabout the same amount of food as is being produced in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sarah Ferris: Oh my goodness. That's crazy. Is that food that's being produced in North America, Europe and Asia or is it food that's then coming from other countries into those countries and then they're wasting it there on top of it? Because we have a lot of imported foods from North Africa in the UK, for example.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. That's actually a really good question. I don't know the answer to that. I would imagine when looking at food waste statistics, especially when you're talking about food waste, which is at the consumer level. So actually let's just clarify this right now. Food waste is a consumer level, shops grocery stores, restaurants, what happens in your kitchen. Food waste is part of food loss. Food loss is the bigger picture looking at everything from what is not harvested in the field to what is lost in transportation, uh, to over orders, things like that.

So it's looking closer to the production side, whereas food waste which is part of food loss is just that small end segment looking at the consumer level.

Sarah Ferris: Right? So food waste is something that you and I can have some power over, but food loss, not so much.

Cait Bagby: Well, I would actually argue, we can have an impact on food loss and I do have a couple of recommendations at the end for how we can help cut down on food loss and food waste. I think from now on out, we'll just call it food waste, just so I'm not saying loss and waste constantly.

Sarah Ferris: Fair enough.

Cait Bagby: Um, but that's a really good question. I'm led to believe that based on all of my research, when we're talking about food waste, we're talking about

both

domestically produced or it is, imported.

Sarah Ferris: So both of those things, it's a combined. Yeah. It doesn't matter where it's come from, but at the end it's getting wasted. So, I mean, that's the thing, cause you're adding on then, like what doubles down on the horror of the fact that all of that waste from the food is that it's probably been transported to get there and then wasted, which is quite horrifying on top of it.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. And a lot of food loss happens during transportation and that can happen due to poor packaging, poor refrigeration, over orders. Uh, again, inclement weather. If trucks can't get places on time or however the food is transported. And then there was a couple of studies and surveys that were done that looked at the grocery store level to find that food was often tossed two weeks before the use by date. So, again, if there's delays in transportation and that food gets there and let's say it's a week or two weeks within the use by date, it's going to go straight to the bin, for the most part.

Sarah Ferris: I was under the impression that lots of supermarkets, and grocery stores were now kind of changing that. And we've got, I don't know if you've got them in the, in the U S I'm sure you do, but we've got little apps and I think it's called one of them is called too good to go and you can register for it. And shops will put up their, maybe their loaves of bread that are at the end of the day, and they'll just give them away for free.

They're trying to make sure that all of that sort of waste food is then passed on to the community for free and it's not going into dumpsters or what have you. Is that happening in the U S as well?

Cait Bagby: We're seeing more of it happening. I know there has been a lot of new legislation that has been introduced in different parts of the world to help cut down on food waste and essentially telling restaurants and stuff, they can't do what they're doing and that food needs to go to the community.

Looking at it from actually from a food perspective, fruits and vegetables, it's roughly 40 to 50% of fruits and vegetables are lost or wasted.

Sarah Ferris: That does makes sense.

Cait Bagby: You know a couple of weeks ago we talked how I went, apple picking.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, you did.

Cait Bagby: One thing that annoys me every year. So I live in one of the capitals of apple production, which is great. Cause fall activities, you get to get out there, you get to pick your apples. Super fun.

Sarah Ferris: Wholesome, so wholesome, Cait.

Cait Bagby: It's on the New England fall checklist. I feel like it's mandatory if you live here, but I'm always appalled at the number of apples on the ground.

And yeah, you could say, oh, well, a lot of them have fallen and some orchards will actually take those apples, gather them up and they use them in cider production, which is pretty cool. Some don't. But I'm always struck by the amount of times people pick an apple off the tree, take a bite out of it and then just throw it on the ground.

Or they just let their kids two handed just ripping the apples down and then throwing them on the ground. And I'm like, oh my gosh, like just don't do that. Don't please don't do that. Eat the entire apple.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah.

Cait Bagby: So fruits and vegetables, 40 to 50% go to loss or waste. There was a study, a few studies actually that looked at European trawlers in the North Sea and they found that 40 to 60% of fish caught were discarded at the sea level.

Sarah Ferris: Wow.

Cait Bagby: We're not talking like catch and release. This was fish that was brought on that died.

Sarah Ferris: Well, I say, hold on what? They just, the catching the fish, but they're not fresh enough to actually use. Is that what you're saying? And I just throw them back in the ocean or what do they do with them?

Cait Bagby: Yeah. They throw them back in the ocean. I don't think freshness plays into it. It could be that it's the wrong type of fish. Right. Because if we're trawling, you're catching, whatever you're catching.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. True.

Cait Bagby: And unfortunately they're just dumped back in, but you know, 40 to 60%.

Sarah Ferris: Right. Okay. But let's think about that for a second. Like in terms of food waste so you've got dead fish. It's going back into the ocean. It's probably then being eaten by other creatures in the ocean. Am I being naive? It's not like a food chain.

Cait Bagby: No, that is a food chain. The problem there becomes overproduction. Right? You're wiping out. That's a whole different topic, but you're wiping out species and in the wild a fish isn't eating.

Well, actually, I don't know how much certain species eat, but let's say they're not eating 10 fish at a time. You know what I mean? If you're just getting dump loads of fish off of a single boat. Yeah. They're going to eat it, but that's not how that's not how things naturally work.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, true. I mean, it's not great. I'm just saying, in terms of the gasses that are then produced by that, it's going to be surely less than the actual fruit and vegetable wastage. What about meats and things? How much do they play into it?

Cait Bagby: Meat actually has the highest carbon footprint.

Sarah Ferris: Feeling very good about being vegetarian, right now. I can tell you.

Cait Bagby: And we should clarify on that too.

When we're talking about food waste, we're not talking about food, that's being composted. We're talking about food that's ending up in landfills, which are anaerobic. And unfortunately in anaerobic settings, there is a massive methane release from the breakdown of food. And methane is 26 more times potent than carbon dioxide in terms of greenhouse gases.

Sarah Ferris: Okay, that just got sciency like really sciency. To tell me about, tell me about anaerobic. What do you mean in terms of food waste with that?

Cait Bagby: Okay. We're talking about food waste that goes to landfills. Landfills for the most part or municipal solid waste facilities are anaerobic, which means that there is not the introduction of oxygen.

So a lot of the stuff is just piled up on top of each other. It sits there. It just sits there and very, very slowly decomposes. What ends up happening is it releases these really, really powerful greenhouse gases, such as methane in really high numbers because there's no oxygen and there's no natural process happening.

And in 2018 food waste accounted for 21.6 of all municipal solid waste.

Sarah Ferris: That's a fair chunk. Am I right in taking this leap then if it's just sitting there and landfill, the better thing to do is to, is it better to then have like a composting and the worms aerating it?

Cait Bagby: Oh, a hundred percent. A hundred percent.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. I didn't know that. That's really interesting. I didn't quite make the connection between it just sitting in a pile and then the worms introducing oxygen to it. Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

Cait Bagby: And it's not just more, I mean, there are different systems they're called aerobic waste or aerobic composting.

They'll actually put pipes underneath it. So there's, I feel like we could do a whole composting show, but very simply, you need oxygen. And if you're a home composter where you can do that through introducing oxygen, by turning piles over, which is what we do on our farm. People will put pipes underneath to introduce the oxygen, but it also needs heat and it needs the microbes, the worms, the... to make everything work together. But if you're throwing food in with mattresses, in with television sets, in with clothing... that's not a healthy environment.

Sarah Ferris: Got it.

Cait Bagby: So always compost food.

Sarah Ferris: That's my reason to actually get the compost bin out now. I feel like I needed that. I needed to hear that today, cause that's where I've been lazy.

Cait Bagby: Do you have a compost bin?

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. So we've got a system here where you've got your normal recycling bins and then you've got your wheelie bin with all your household waste but there's also a little green bin that you can put like cornstarch bags and you put your vegetable and food waste in it. But it's one of those like step too far things and I've done it before and then the foxes got in and strewn all over the neighborhood and I was kinda like, I'm going to leave that for another day. So you've given me the incentive to go and get that out and actually put that back into practice in the house.

Cait Bagby: Do you want a little tip on that one?

Sarah Ferris: Please.

Cait Bagby: What we do is we actually keep our compost in the freezer until we're ready to take it out and it will cut down on the smell, which if you live in a city can attract a lot of animals. So I would say freeze it and then add it.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, I think the issue there is I've got a freezer full of food so I don't know if I could even squeeze it in. But it's weekly, right? How hard can it be to just put it to side, keep it there for a week. I can do that. I think I can do this.

Cait Bagby: Oh, good. So you're already on your challenge for the week. That is your challenge for the week. Compost, all your food scraps.

Sarah Ferris: Well, I've peaked too early.

Cait Bagby: I know.

Sarah Ferris: All right. Well, you might have to come up with another one. Oh, I have another one. If you want it.

Cait Bagby: Don't worry. I've got them in spades. We're good.

Sarah Ferris: Watch out.

Cait Bagby: All right. What else when we're talking about food? We know a lot of food is wasted.

Reasons for food waste, start to finish in the supply chain, bad weather, processing, overproduction, over buying, poor planning, label confusion.

Sarah Ferris: I am so guilty of that,

Cait Bagby: Of overbuying or labels?

Sarah Ferris: All of that. Just put my name beside all of those things. In fact, I just went to the supermarket today and I have become more conscious now because of last week's challenge, which we'll probably go into a bit later, but of what I'm purchasing and what the packaging it's in and all that kind of thing.

But yeah, I find it like the whole time consuming nature of thinking of planning out meals. I'm very, rarely will throw out food because I feel too guilty to do that now.

Cait Bagby: I'm honestly, I'm right there with you. I cannot be bothered to meal plan. Like at all, I've tried it, it is just not for me.

And I find that when I do actually meal plan, I end up wasting more food cause I'll get to the end of the day and I'm like, I don't want to make that. Like I was super ambitious this weekend, but I don't want to make that.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. You're 16 item Heston, Blumenthal sauce that goes with the 52 item Gordon Ramsay number on the side, you know, I totally get it. Totally.

Cait Bagby: I found food prepping works a lot better than meal planning. So if I have a lot of ingredients and I'm just in the mood to cook or, well, I guess this is going to come up with wins for later. When, it's the end of our harvest season and I have 50 butternut squash sitting on my table.

I will just spend the day peeling, cooking, chunking, freezing, and I create all these different raw ingredients for the most part, put them in the freezer and then I can just pull things out as I want them. So if I want butternut squash, I can either pull out soup, or I could pull out cubed, and then I can saute it, or I can roast it, or I can do whatever I want with it, but everything is ready to go.

Sarah Ferris: I love that. You must have a massive freezer. Do you have like multiple freezers going on in the house?

Cait Bagby: Yes,

Sarah Ferris: I think that's the key. If you're going to do food prep though, because you've got to have an, you don't want it to be going down to the bottom of the chest freezer and never be seen again.

Cait Bagby: Right. I know people have chest freezers. I personally am not a massive fan because again, I'm not searching for things. But what I found has been really successful because my mother has one is she puts on the inside lid, a list of everything that's in the freezer and when it went in the freezer.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. She's next level.

Cait Bagby: She's super organized.

Sarah Ferris: Oh gosh. Mine would be just a place where things go to die.

Cait Bagby: Well, the good news is as long as you're checking it, like twice a year, you'd be fine because food will keep for a very, very long time in a freezer.

Sarah Ferris: True.

Cait Bagby: What else? Oh yeah, the best buy in safety dates. Right? That's that's another thing that leads to food waste.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. There's one of them that you can fudge and just like, sort of push out a bit longer. Right. And it's not going to kill you, but there's another one that's like you should definitely, is it the use by date that you've got to stick to with food?

Cait Bagby: Yes. Food safety recommendation used by date. Use it by that date. There are some exceptions I'm not going to go into them. I would definitely talk with a food safety expert on that. The other one best buy is what people confuse it with.

So best buy is like buying a bag of bread or, a jar of salsa and it says best buy next Sunday. You can eat it well after that date, it's just might not be as fresh.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. Yeah. I take the best buy with a grain of salt. Hey, I've got a question for you. This is one thing that my kids always say that we do that as weird in England, as new Zealanders. Their UK counterparts don't do this in their household and that's, we always freeze bread. Do you freeze bread?

Cait Bagby: Because I'm gluten free my bread comes frozen.

Sarah Ferris: Well that doesn't count, but would you, is it normal thing?

Cait Bagby: No, it's not. No, not at all. Most people have bread boxes of some kind, like they'll put it on the counter or they just keep them in the shelf. Because we buy our bread frozen, we then put it in the fridge where it de-thaws and then I always put mine in the toaster because gluten-free bread is...

Sarah Ferris: Disgusting.

Cait Bagby: You have to warm it up.

Sarah Ferris: Is it that?

Cait Bagby: It's not my favorite. I'll say that.. Uh, but definitely warm it up. There's a little tip and trick for anybody who is a gluten-free. Warm it up before you eat it.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, interesting. Okay. So I didn't realize that the whole bread freezing thing was just a little Kiwi anomaly.

Cait Bagby: They don't do that in the UK, do they?

Sarah Ferris: No, all the kids friends, think they're crazy.

Cait Bagby: So what do you do then? We're side tracking, but I'm interested in this. So you take it from the freezer and then what do you do? Like pop it in the toaster?

Sarah Ferris: No, no, no, no. It's when you've got excess bread, for example. So I've just been to the supermarket and I've bought a couple of loaves of bread and I've put the ones that we're not currently using in the freezer and then when we need bread, we take them out and they defrost and they're exactly the same as they would have been before.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. I've always done that growing up to be. That also came from... my family, we grew up prepping food. If we had extra food, I'm not talking like preppers or anything like that but if we had apples at the end of the season, and I just did this, this weekend, I made apple sauce and apple turnovers and apple pies.

And it just used up all the apples before they went bad. You can freeze all of that stuff. So if I made like an apple bread or zucchini bread, which is like more of a dessert type thing, you can put those in the freezer and then all year long, take them out. Just like you would have a loaf of bread.

Sarah Ferris: You make me laugh so hard. You are like, I don't know the Waltons. That's what I'm imagining, this American I'm just got my apple pie, my apple turnover. I'm just making apple sauce.

Cait Bagby: Oh, there's a big debate on apple pie. Do you put cheese on it? Do you put lemon in it? Do you...

Sarah Ferris: What! Oh, back that train right up. Did you just say cheese with apple?

Cait Bagby: Yes. I believe it's a Midwestern thing and I think you put, I think it's like yellow cheese. I don't honestly know. I've never made it.

Sarah Ferris: Are you talking like cheddar cheese. I mean, if you're talking like cream cheese. Yeah, I could.

Cait Bagby: No, no, no, no.

Sarah Ferris: Just a whack of Gouda in there.

Cait Bagby: I think it's like cheddar cheese, but they have, you never had sliced apple with a good piece of cheese and a little honey drizzled on it.

Sarah Ferris: I can see the appeal in that, but I can't see it as a pie that's too far. Cause I don't know. Am I eating like a savory, I'm eating a sweet, I don't want to be that confused.

Cait Bagby: It's cheddar cheese. That's what people use. White cheddar cheese.

Sarah Ferris: I love cheese. I'd probably be into it, but...

Cait Bagby: There's your challenge for the week? Make a apple cheddar cheddar, cheddar pie.

Sarah Ferris: I've got a lovely block of blue in the fridge maybe I'll whack that in there.

Cait Bagby: Oh gosh, no one should have that in their fridge. That's disgusting.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, I love 'em. Good with a pear.

Cait Bagby: So we're differing kombucha and, uh, blue cheese and diverging as well. Uh, okay. So let's touch on this, which is, cause you brought this up earlier, food insecurity. We know United States, 30 to 40% of food is lost or wasted. In 2020, and this is for the United States, I do not have a global number roughly 10.5% or 13.8 million households in the United States were food insecure.

Sarah Ferris: what does that mean?

Cait Bagby: That means that they, at one time or another, during 2020 did not know, or were unsure of where their next meal would be coming from. So that's considered food insecure.

Sarah Ferris: Right. Okay. That's a big number, 13.8 million, did you?

Cait Bagby: Yes. And that number was actually going down for a little bit and then went up a little bit during COVID, because people were out of work and because children weren't in school. So children weren't sure where their meals were coming from, families who relied on that. Some studies found that by reducing food waste.. This is going to be a very simple sounding statement and then I'm going to talk a little bit more about it.

If we reduced food waste by 15%, that could provide enough food for more than 25 million people, annually. In the United States.

Sarah Ferris: Wow. That is problem-solved right?

Cait Bagby: Well, it's more than, it's almost double. The UN food and agricultural organization, FAO. They found that by seriously curbing or completely reversing food waste, there'd be more than enough food to feed 2 billion people.

And that's more than twice the number of malnourished people in the world.

Sarah Ferris: Oh my goodness. There's a solution right in front of us. Isn't there?

Cait Bagby: This is why I wanted to back that up cause it sounds like a really simple thing. Like if we just don't throw out food, we can feed the world but it doesn't work like that because food loss and waste is so distributed throughout the food chain or I'm sorry, throughout the supply chain. So it's everything from produce that's not being picked because of labor shortages or bad weather or pests to transportation and packaging. Like if things are bruised or damaged or a package opens and something spills out to refrigeration and temperatures to getting the food there in time to spoilage or to now we're getting into shops and restaurants, if things are being sold, if you're not eating what's on your plate at a restaurant, if you're ordering too much or when you bring it home and put it in your refrigerator and either forget about it or don't use all of it.

So there's no single point.

Sarah Ferris: No, but there's definitely something that you and I can do from the consumer's perspective. I don't know if you know the answer to this and I'm just putting you on the spot, but is there a percentage of the food waste of overall that comes from that end consumer that we can actually do something about?

Cait Bagby: Yes. The USDA economic research service, that's a mouthful. They estimated that around 31% of loss occurs at the retailer and consumer level.

Sarah Ferris: So that's something that we could actually make it the 31%. That's huge.

Cait Bagby: Right and then the UN went on to say that around 60% of that waste is in the home.

So I'm not entirely sure if that meant that 60% of that 31% happens in the home versus a retailer or 60% of food waste, but either way, whether it's 31% or 60% of that 31%, and for anybody who's new to the show, Sarah and I don't generally do maths.

Sarah Ferris: We don't do math.

Cait Bagby: We're bad at it. Right, that's a large amount.

Sarah Ferris: I was going to say that I'm not hearing percentages when you say that I'm hearing hope that I've got some actionable plan that I can put into place to make a difference. That's what I'm hearing.

Cait Bagby: It wouldn't be the Guilty Greenie if we didn't have some takeaways, would it? (Laughing) is so true? All right. So yeah, takeaways, there's actually a lot of them. You and I touched on composting so if you're going to not be eating food compost what you can. Not, all food is compostable. We'll do a show on composting. We'll break that down. First and foremost, don't overbuy. I know in the United States, is it like this in the UK as well? We have bulk stores everywhere.

Sarah Ferris: Yes. Well we've got Costco, which I think is one of yours, isn't it?

Cait Bagby: Yes.

Sarah Ferris: Costco, I thought it was the most amazing thing when I first moved to the UK, I was like, oh my God. But I would end up with a great deal that half it gets wasted because you cannot consume that much mustard in a year. No matter how many people you are serving or Mayo. So yeah. I don't go there anymore for that reason.

Cait Bagby: And again, when we give these suggestions, obviously this doesn't apply to everybody. If you're someone who buys in bulk and you sit there and you prep all your food and freeze it and you have your checklist and that's how you consume your food, then it doesn't apply to you. But if you were sitting there going, Hmm, yeah, I do buy a package of 40 apples and really 30 of them are going in the bin at the end of the month. This applies to you. So don't buy it.

Sarah Ferris: It applies to me then. Yeah.

Cait Bagby: So I would say, if you don't need to, and it doesn't serve you obviously don't buy in bulk. In the homes, and remember earlier on, I said, there was some interesting studies about food waste in the home, there was two really interesting things that came out of it.

One was there's a psychological component to food waste and this example was given. Let's say you buy a carton of eggs and as you are going to put them in the fridge as us Americans do. I know in the UK...

Sarah Ferris: We do. We do.

Cait Bagby: You do them in the fridge?

Sarah Ferris: I do.

Cait Bagby: Aren't they sold on the shelf though?

Sarah Ferris: They are sold on the shelf so I probably don't need to put them in, but they've got a, like a little handy egg holder in my fridge so it's begging to go in there.

Cait Bagby: I want to know who was the lobbyist who got that included in fridges, because I find that just very fascinating that eggs have their own section, designated section.

All right. So the study went, you take your eggs, you either get to put them on the fridge in the fridge or on the counter and you drop the carton. And they break. People were really upset by this. They were upset that they just bought their eggs. They broke them. They didn't get to enjoy them. Now, if those eggs sat in your fridge for a month or two, and you threw them in the bin because they're not edible anymore.

People were less likely to be upset. There's a novelty aspect to buying food. It's new, it's exciting. All the things I can do with it and make.

Sarah Ferris: Is it also that you've just freshly parted with that money?

Cait Bagby: Yeah, I would imagine that's part of it. Yeah. But people generally feel, I'm not gonna say better they feel less worse than if they just brought it home and immediately put it in the bin.

Sarah Ferris: That's a very interesting way to look at it isn't it? I will definitely be reconnecting in my brain, those two things.

Cait Bagby: The other study that was interesting was what they call negative or white space in a fridge. Since the 1960s and seventies, both plates and fridges have gotten bigger. And what they found is people do not like to look at what they call white spaces in the fridge. They want their fridges to be full. They want it to be a bounty of food and if there's space in your fridge, There's something in you that just says like, oh my gosh, I don't have enough. I'm going to guess it's more of a primal need, but I don't really know. But obviously packing your fridge full of food you can't possibly eat or will not eat, it just leads to more food waste.

So this is where looking at all of those really pretty pictures of super organized food in a fridge that is not filled to the brim comes in handy.

Sarah Ferris: I just cleaned my fridge out this weekend. One of those I'm just purging and looking at the use by dates and everything. I have to say I was enjoying my white space. It was just so nice. Then when I bought my groceries today, everything had a place and I could see it was so much more organized. I could see what meals would work together. There was a joy in my fridge because it was full of white space for awhile, but I've just rammed it full of food again. So guilty.

Cait Bagby: Am I the only one, like in my fridge, everything has a place. Upper right-hand corners where drinks go leftovers go second shelf down on the left. For me, it's super organized so that I don't waste food. And then my husband comes along like a tornado and just moves things around.

Sarah Ferris: Oh yeah, I would love to live like that, but I have four people in my house that decide to just play where's Wally with the eggs or what have you, you know, like you can never find the margarine or they open the fridge door and just go, where's the, where's the, where's there? I'm like six shelf from the, left two degrees to the right. How do I know? You've thrown it in the back. somewhere. Useless.

Cait Bagby: I just started asking the, did you look, or did you me look? And my husband's like, what the heck does that mean? I'm like, well, did you look like you would look or did you look like I would look, which requires moving thing and checking behind things.

Sarah Ferris: There was no, nothing more frustrating than somebody opening the fridge and just saying, where is it? When they haven't moved anything. I agree.

Cait Bagby: We've digressed. So white space is good. I agree with you Sarah, I actually prefer my fridge to have more negative space in it. It just feels calmer. Uh, smaller plates portion. So plate sizes have gone up. I believe it's 36% since the late 1960s, early 1970s. As our plates get bigger, we think we have to fill them and then our eyes are bigger than our stomach, so we don't end up eating all of it. You can always go back for seconds. Most of the time.

Sarah Ferris: But psychologically, I don't think you do, which is the beauty of a smaller plate.

Cait Bagby: That's a good point. What else? Oh, a lot of grocery stores in the United States, and I'm curious if they have this in the UK, they have like a sales rack. It tends to be in the bakery section most of the time, but there's like a little rack of food that's like going to expire or should be used by the next few days.

So they'll mark it down. And a lot of people skip over that or it's like an apple that has a bruise on it or something.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, no, we definitely have that. I love that section because the thing with that section is I'll end up with something I never knew that I wanted as well. It doesn't mean I don't need it, but because I do eat it.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. Okay. I just, I feel like that's a good way to try out new food though. If you're, curious about that. All right. So sales rack always good. Uh, buying locally, right? We talked about this with the apples. If you can buy locally from a sustainable farm. Obviously not everybody has access to that, but if you do you help cut down on food waste in terms of transport loss.

And then if you're eating at a restaurant, take out, you know, get, get your out.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. That's something that we've started doing, but it's not something that feels very natural. I think it's more normal. Is that quite normal in the U S to do that?

Cait Bagby: It's super normal and I think part of the reason it is, is because portion sizes in the United States are meant for two or three people

Sarah Ferris: Two or 300 people.

Cait Bagby: It's insane. Honestly,

Sarah Ferris: It is one thing that is shocking whenever I've been in America the portion will come out and I'm like, wow, is this the buffet for other people to come to my table and eat off my plate? This is insanely large.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. Take out in the United States is super big. I know in some countries in Europe, people are really embarrassed by it. You do not ask for a to go container?

Sarah Ferris: Mm. I think that probably depend on the kind of restaurant, in fact I was at really nice local Thai restaurant and people did take takeaway containers from there, but they also have a delivery takeout menu so it was kind of natural, but normally in a restaurant, unless it's like a takeaway place, it wouldn't be something that I would be brave enough to ask for.

Cait Bagby: If anybody owns or works in a restaurant is listening by cutting down portion sizes you cut down on food waste, which actually saves you money in the restaurant industry from having to buy more food.

Sarah Ferris: And I was going to say, there's two apps that we use and I mentioned one of them before, which is too good to go. You can go on there and get end of day sushi from your local sushi place or bread from your local bread place. All the leftover food that will go to the waste otherwise. And there's another one called Olio. Have you got that over there?

Cait Bagby: Yeah. Olio is in 31 or 32 countries, I think.

Sarah Ferris: Okay. Right. And I haven't used it for a while, but I think it's got the same kind of principle that it does help with redistribution of food that might be going to waste or even not just food. Am I right?

Cait Bagby: Yeah, I believe Olio is also like furniture and clothing.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah.

Cait Bagby: And the one you were talking about too good. What's it called too good to be true. Is that?

Sarah Ferris: No. Too Good To Go.

Cait Bagby: I believe it's at the end of the day, they severely mark it down. So if it's like an 18 pound dinner, they'll mark it down to like three or four pounds. Right?

Sarah Ferris: Exactly. And my kids love it. There's their favorite sushi place, but it's quite expensive then they'll you can just book in a slot for like six o'clock and know that you're going to go pick up a mystery sushi box for example.

Cait Bagby: They have that one in the United States as well. I believe on that one you can put in, if you have any food sensitivities or allergies. Not all of them you can. There's a couple more there's Food For All in the United States.

It's very much like Too Good To Go. There's Flash Food and then there's Food Rescue which will help give excess food to those in need. So we were talking about how in the United

States, 13.8 million households are food insecure. Uh, that was 2020 numbers. Food Rescue U.S. will help get the food from restaurants to shelters or to organizations that help distribute it for social services or for social agencies.

Sarah Ferris: oh, I love that. I think there's a similar one over here. I can't remember what it's called.

Cait Bagby: Is it Food Cloud?

Sarah Ferris: I have not heard of that one. I'm going to look it up.

Cait Bagby: It's the same as food rescue US or similar in that they take surplus food from either retailers, farmers, and they'll help distribute them.

And all of these, you can volunteer. A lot of these are run a volunteer organization, so they need people to help pick up the food, deliver the food. So if you're interested in that or ask your supermarket what they're doing with their leftover food and if they don't know, direct them to this app or organization. You don't have to deliver things to be an activist. You can literally just push your supermarket to get involved. That's activism.

Sarah Ferris: I love that idea.

Cait Bagby: I feel like we've covered a lot on food waste and in that kind of same vein, let's talk about the highs and lows of our week.

Sarah Ferris: Okay. Do you want to go first or shall I go first?

Cait Bagby: I've been talking a lot. You go first.

Sarah Ferris: Okay. This week, none of my guilty high points or low points or laundry related, you'll be very pleased to hear. My high point for the week was that I recycled my coffee machine.

Which I am addicted to coffee. It's one thing I can't let go of. So our coffee machine, it wasn't functioning quite right. Normally I would have been like, right, dump it, it's dead. But we put it on a street, WhatsApp chat and said, listen, is there anyone that would like this coffee machine?

It needs a little TLC past our experience. We can't work it out. And the next thing you know, somebody came and picked it up and recycled it and used it and was so happy with it that it got a new lease of life. And I was just so, so thrilled about that. And so we bought a new coffee machine, because I can't live without it, and I was really like torn between what kind of coffee machine do I get are the pods bad? Blah, blah, blah. But like you just said, I asked the question when I purchased it, they said the pods for this coffee machine they are aluminium and they are a hundred percent recycled. And I said, but where are they recycled?

Are they actually recycled? And where are they recycled? And they said they were recycled near Gatwick, which is a large airport in London. They've got a plant in there and I said, well, that's good. That's not that far away. So it was not even a massive journey to get there. So I was asking those questions.

Cait Bagby: That makes me so happy because it really is like what a sentence or two to make it, to like bring it to someone's attention.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. And to know that I care enough to ask the question if they're selling me something and they want to sell it to people that they're going to have those questions asked.

Cait Bagby: And I also like that because the more people who ask, really simple questions like that, like is this recyclable, gets them having to think about it.

And the more people that ask the more it indicates to a company Hey, people are interested in this, so let's figure it out. Let's do it.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. What are the consumers asking a lot. Yeah. Yeah. Uh, so that was my high. What was your high?

Cait Bagby: My high was food prep. It's the end of, pretty much the end of, harvest season for us.

So we were breaking down all of the squash, apples. We also have chicken and all that kind of stuff. So making different broths, uh, gravies, things like that...

Sarah Ferris: Oh, that sounds like heaven in your house.

Cait Bagby: It's a full day of cooking though.

Sarah Ferris: But I love that. That's so satisfying.

Cait Bagby: I like taste testing everything. Um, yeah. So just making different soups and breads and pastries and cutting up and chunking all the squashes that we didn't break down or roast or anything and just prepping it all and freezing it so we can pull it out throughout the winter.

Sarah Ferris: Well done you. Well done. Okay. What was your low point then?

Cait Bagby: My low point was actually a little bit of a irritant. I'm like irritated with myself and to also with this situation that happened. We had helped some people move and they wanted to get rid of a bunch of stuff.

They rented a dumpster and I knew some of the stuff was like new or barely used and could be donated. And I was really torn between taking that stuff and putting it up for sale on

Facebook marketplace or bringing it to different organizations and having to explain to these individuals that, Hey, this stuff is, is good.

Or, kinda taking my time to actually work on projects I needed to do and just be hands off. And so my low is that I chose just not to get involved. But I feel really bad because I watch all this stuff go into a dumpster and I know it could be reused, but I just, I personally did not have the time. That was really tough.

Sarah Ferris: It's really interesting that your low is the same as pretty much my low.

Cait Bagby: Is it?

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, last weekend we went to the dump and I felt so guilty because what I had to get rid of was my COVID lockdown 1.0 project, which was when I thought I was going to have a green thumb. Turns out they were just infected because I killed every plant that I touched.

And honestly, I bought like a greenhouse that pop-up greenhouse to house these dying plants. I mean, there were the most expensive cucumbers that you've ever had. They were like 50 quid each by the time they were made. But over the winter that happened after that, the greenhouse, I should've put it away, but it just kind of disintegrated.

It was knocked around by bad weather and it broke and the poles came off and I was like, oh God, it's just an eyesore. And I felt the same way as you did so guilty that I was putting that into the landfill. I mean, we did separate it out, so it was kind of recyclable metal or what have you, but it still doesn't feel great. So my lesson is learned there. I have to say, I'm not going to be growing anything for a while.

Cait Bagby: But that's exactly what the show is about. You and I, we are not perfect. And it's not okay in my opinion, for people to get up and talk about the things everybody should be doing without also laying bare the difficulties of just operating in the society and Economic model, which we operate under. We need to talk about those things and make it very clear that no one is perfect and we can't judge others. We can talk to them.

Sarah Ferris: I was gonna say, it's time is the equation as well in there, isn't it? It's like how much time have I got to do those jobs that actually add into what is already a busy life.

Cait Bagby: Right, right. Exactly. Like I just, I did not have a day to sit and sort through someone else's stuff, even though I knew better. I don't have that time. Guilty Greenie. We're both guilty of not being perfect. Very guilty this week, I would say.

Sarah Ferris: We're nailing the title.

Cait Bagby: Let's talk about your challenge. Was that a high or was it a low? And your challenge was a zero waste meal for the family?

Sarah Ferris: zero waste meal for the family was, it was an interesting one. There was definitely highs and lows. Maybe I'll just play you a little bit of audio and what I want you to hear is just maybe some of the pain points along the way of trying to find a meal that everybody would like. Uh, and let's just see how it unfolds

This week's Guilty Greenie challenge is that I've got to make a meal that has zero waste.

Sarah's Family: "Make it good then."

Sarah Ferris: Not that kind of a zero waste. I mean, let's be honest. There's not going to be waste with Joshua, but whatever you make, I've got to use the entire vegetable.

Sarah's Family: "Uh, There is enough Kumara. Kumara curry that we had. Or mushrooms? You can do mushrooms. Uh. I'm not eating mushrooms."

Sarah Ferris: I'm thinking a vegetable pie with like mash on the top.

Sarah's Family: "It sounds disgusting."

Sarah Ferris: It does look disgusting in the recipe, but I reckon I could pimp it up with some nice spices and things. Yes.

Sarah's Family: "Can you just make something nice. Like.."

Sarah Ferris: Like what?

Sarah's Family: "You could use rice or pasta or something like that. Right."

Sarah Ferris: They come in plastic bags and I'm trying to be like...

Sarah's Family: "can you go to one of those those bin places where you put it in your own container or" whatever?

Sarah Ferris: Oh, like the refill larder.

Sarah's Family: "Yeah. It doesn't have to be gross and disgusting"

Sarah Ferris: It might not be gross and disgusting.

Sarah's Family: "Vegetable pie?"

Sarah Ferris: I know. Well, the other option is I do a roasted vegetables with loads of flavor and then like vine tomatoes.

Sarah's Family: "There's not a meal that's a side"

Sarah Ferris: I'm vegetarian. It's a full meal for me. Or cauliflower roast?

Sarah's Family: "No cauliflower nothing. Remove cauliflower from the equation."

Sarah Ferris: It's supposed to be really good. And I can use the whole thing. I could use as like the centerpiece, and have like roasted tomatoes on the vine. Still keep it. Let's go get some inspiration at the market and see what happens.

What are you doing?

Sarah's Family: "I'm trying to cauliflower. I don't like cauliflower. I'll try it to see making me one taste. It's not too bad. It's edible. I wouldn't choose to eat it. If there's nothing else to eat, I guess I could eat that".

Cait Bagby: So many opinions for people not cooking.

Sarah Ferris: I know, and I should preface it by saying like, kumara is what we call sweet potato in New Zealand. It's the Maori word for sweet potato.

Cait Bagby: I was going to ask that.

Sarah Ferris: Okay. I knew you would be something with the huhu grub?

Cait Bagby: I did like the mushroom suggestion. That actually that was a great one.

Sarah Ferris: Except it would have been a great suggestion if it was just not me and Gareth eating the mushrooms because nobody else would have touched them. And I think the hilarious thing is that you could see cauliflower is something he cannot stand, he hates cauliflower and then he ended up having eat cauliflower.

Cait Bagby: So did he like it?

Sarah Ferris: Nope. Not so much.

Cait Bagby: You made cauliflower, but what was in it? Walk me through this recipe.

Sarah Ferris: Okay. So I thought let's make a little Mexican Fiesta. The thing that was fun about it was that we went to the market, which I normally would just go to the supermarket.

We went to the actual outdoor market that's close to us so we were buying locally. Not packaged, so you're not getting plastics and all that kind of thing. So that was what I was thinking there. I was thinking, okay, well, I'm getting zero waste from the packaging side of things here, which is a win already.

And it got us talking about what kind of meals to have, and then the cauliflower kind of became the hero of the meal. I had a guacamole on the side and then I had a salsa that I'd made on the side. That was all pretty good. Oh, and then, so I had vine tomatoes with the little Viney thing on, and I thought, what am I going to do with that?

So I put that into the Mexican rice that I made, because I know that adds flavor. I squeezed the limes into the guacamole and then I put them into the rice to cook with it. So I wasn't wasting any of that. But here's my problem. This is where I fell down. I could have just done the cauliflower and not the guacamole and then I would have been zero waste, but I really wanted that guacamole. And what that needed was red onion, which has the papery, but on the outside and the same with the garlic.

Cait Bagby: Yeah.

Sarah Ferris: And then the avocado was the other issue. So the avocado skin, I couldn't get rid of. Now the pit I did something quite special with, you'll be pleased.

Cait Bagby: Did you plant it?

Sarah Ferris: I did! It'll die, but that's not the point I tried. I tried. Right. Um, but yeah. So what do you supposed to do with the papery bit of onion and garlic?

Cait Bagby: You can actually save those and reuse them in making stocks. You can put them in like a little cheese cloth type bag and put it in your water along with your different food scraps.

You can put them in the little bags, some herbs stems, whatever you got left and create homemade vegetable stocks.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, well, that's again, a time thing, isn't it? There's a picture of actually how much waste I did create. Cause as we say, the Guilty Greenie and Gareth, my husband was like, well, you gonna have to lay it bare because that's, why it's called the Guilty Greenie. You've got to be honest. Cause I was thinking I could just hide those, but I didn't. And, and the there for all to see that I probably failed the challenge.

Cait Bagby: I would say, no, you got a really good meal out of it, which sounds super yummy. And part of the challenge isn't just whether or not it's successful, it's learning to understand our foods system, not just foods, but like why we do things and really questioning and challenging how we're doing things. And so a lot of it's introspective. I would say, the fact that when buying a new coffee machine, you're like, is this recyclable, what's it made from?

It shows the challenges are working. Cause you're starting to think about things differently.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. And the other thing I was thinking when I was doing these challenges, thank God I'm vegetarian because I don't know how I would've got around a meat portion of it.

Cait Bagby: Yeah. That would definitely be tricky. Although there are places where you can get meat wrapped in, um, like a wax paper. Well, yeah, a wax paper. But depending on where you live, that's few and far between. Not talking about the packaging cause that's a whole different subject, but food waste in general. You can plant the avocado seed. You can do other things with that too. You can actually use the avocado seed to dye clothing, which is kind of cool.

Sarah Ferris: And that's never going to happen.

Cait Bagby: You can use the skins. You can put them in your plants. Like you could literally take the skins and put them in your plants, which will help fertilize them.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, I should've done that. That would have been easy. That would have been an easy thing to do because I have..

Cait Bagby: Burying the evidence

Sarah Ferris: I wouldn't have felt guilty at all.

Cait Bagby: I would say challenge well done.

Sarah Ferris: Thank you. So I can take it as a bit of a win then.

Cait Bagby: Definitely.

Sarah Ferris: I'm going to go forward with that in my consciousness to add to my, you know, new practices and new behavior.

Cait Bagby: I like that. Challenge for next week?

Sarah Ferris: I do, but I feel like I already know it now, if it's the composting thing.

Cait Bagby: Oh no. It's to make apple pie with cheddar cheese.

Sarah Ferris: Oh my God. You'll see me in hospital. It just sounds so disgusting.

Cait Bagby: I need to give you this as a challenge so that I know if it's safe to make or not.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. I'm imaging a recipe in my head already that I could make it work with like a caramelized onion chutney with apple sort of sauce so it becomes like a savory thing maybe but...

Cait Bagby: You're getting super fancy and I like it.

Sarah Ferris: Oh yeah. I've got lots of unopened cookbooks in my house. Don't you worry?

Cait Bagby: Your challenge for next week is composting. Anything that you can compost in your house, which isn't just food scraps.

Sarah Ferris: Okay. Part of me is like, oh shit, that's a real pain in my butt, but I'm going to do it.

Cait Bagby: Okay. Pain is good sometimes, sometimes. And you have the composting services, correct?

Sarah Ferris: Exactly. Yep.

Cait Bagby: Here's the followup then, because I know you've done composting before, give them a call and ask them about their process and ask them how much food waste they get.

Sarah Ferris: Okay.

Cait Bagby: Or any issues they have, like, are they getting things that aren't food waste and what happens to the entire lot when that occurs.

Sarah Ferris: Oh, God, you're piling on the challenges.

Cait Bagby: I'm making you put together the next episode, I need answers from you.

Sarah Ferris: All right. Well, I think that's pretty much the episode for the week. Is it? We've covered so much.

Cait Bagby: Yes. Do you want to introduce our next topic?

Sarah Ferris: Yes. Now we briefly spoke about it before I haven't come up with a catchy title, but I'm sure I will by then. So I was driving past a cemetery the other day with my husband and I looked over and went, oh, that seems like a waste of space.

I wonder what the best way to die is, uh, which was a really cheery thought. But I was kind of thinking I'd like to be balled up into the base of a tree, which I've seen those cocoons. So I want to ask Cait, what is the best way to basically die.

Cait Bagby: Just to clarify, we're not going to actually be talking about how you should die or if you should kill anyone, we'll be talking about funerals and burials.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah. That was the most sustainable way to dispose of your body.

Cait Bagby: I think this is a really fascinating topic because there's so many options that people don't know.

Sarah Ferris: Yeah, I'm all in for this. I'd like to do something really creative. I want to go out with a massive bang. I want to become, like, I don't know the biggest tree in the world after I'm gone or something ridiculous. Yeah,

Cait Bagby: Well with that

join us next week to see if Sarah accomplished her challenge for more, the good, the bad, and the laughable.

As we tackle our own sustainability journeys, exclusively on Fireside in the Climate Collab Auditorium. Thank you for joining us on this week's episode of Guilty Greenie.

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Sarah Ferris: Bye-bye.