An app is trying to connect consumers to waste food at a bargain price

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At the end of a given day, restaurants, markets and other food stores often have leftover food that is still perfectly good, but can no longer be sold the next day. That food often gets thrown away, contributing to

increasing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. And nearly 700 million people around the world still go to bed hungry every night.

Too Good to Go, a tech-for-good app that launched in 2016 and has recently expanded to Chicago is fighting [food waste](#) by connecting users to [surplus food](#) from [local businesses](#). Users pay a fee of $4-$6 and receive a "Surprise Bag," filled with food worth three times more than they paid.

"It's really about getting that win-win-win concept, where stores don't throw away food anymore, where consumers like you and me can contribute to fighting against food [waste](#), while getting great food for a third of the price, and where together we really help the planet, because today food waste is responsible for eight % of greenhouse gas emissions," said co-founder Lucie Basch.

Launched in the U.S. only 10 months ago, the app is already running in more than 10 cities and launched in Chicago a couple of weeks ago.

"We've already saved 5,000 meals from the trash and we have more than 100 local partners," Basch said. "So it actually went really, really fast in Chicago."

Deep Purpl, a local açaí bowl company, is one of those partners, and its founder, Gabriel Fleury, says they receive about two to five Too Good to Go orders per day, on average. He found out about the app when one of its co-founders knocked on his door, and he immediately loved the idea.

"I wanted to do it right away," Fleury said.

He said the app helps save food that would have otherwise gone to waste due to customers not picking up their orders, or employees making mistakes. According to him, the implementation was very simple and the

app is "super easy" to use and has been well-liked by customers.

"I've worked in the restaurant industry, and there's so much (waste)," said Paul Ramsy, 32, of Wicker Park, a Too Good To Go user. "Just knowing that what I'm picking up at the end of the day is not getting tossed, that makes me feel great."

He said his experience has been seamless so far and plans to use the app at least once a week.

In just a few months in the U.S., there are already close to 1.5 million registered Too Good To Go users.

"The fact that it's so simple, and it really fits in the operation of stores makes it really successful and makes everyone willing to join," Basch said.

In addition to reducing their food waste and receiving a profit from the fee minus the TGTG commission, Basch said businesses also benefit from the app because it brings in new consumers that discover their food through the app.

But the company goes beyond saving food from businesses and stores that would have otherwise ended up in a landfill. It aims to address food insecurity by partnering with food charities to complement the work they already do.

The app is really popular among college students, Basch said, as well as people who have access to the internet and smartphones but still may be "struggling to feed themselves," at the end of the month.

"When you reduce food waste, you can also really help reduce food insecurity, so that's why we work really closely with food charity

partners in every city we launch at the local level, and also having discussions with partners like Feeding America to have an impact at the national level as well," Basch said.

According to Basch, charities can pick up some leftover food, but are often unable to pick up all of it.

"That's where we come into place and to really complement the action, to get those couple like, sandwiches and bagels at the end of the day that can't be interesting enough to get a charity to come in, because it's too little food," Basch said.

In Chicago, the company works with charity partners like the Greater Chicago Food Depository. On the app, users also have the option of donating directly to any of the company's charity partners.

Paulette's Public Market, another Chicago partner, has enjoyed success with TGTG.

While the number of bags sold really varies day to day, "as many bags as we put up, they sell," owner Philip Baber said. Examples of what customers can expect to get in their bags include a loaf of West Town multigrain bread, along with housemade chorizo and queso dip, trout dip, a quart of macaroni deli salad and more.

The market, which sells fresh deli items that usually don't have a very long shelf life, is very conscious of food waste and sustainability.

"It was really a good opportunity for us to cut down dramatically on the waste that we had," he said.

To improve education around food and sustainability, the company's website includes helpful tips on how to reduce food waste, including

tools to better understand food labels and expiration dates, how to store food properly and how to reuse and repurpose food.

It also includes educational materials like articles, case studies, teacher guides and quizzes for students from elementary to university level, to make sure that "everyone can change their mindsets long-term, and their habits," Basch said.

"The beauty of Too Good to Go is that, literally as a store owner, if you are about to throw food away tonight, then just give us a call because on the same day you can have people that come to your places and save the food."

More information: App site: toogoodtogo.com/en-us/

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