

Press release

For immediate release

HKU Teams Up with Local Chefs and Sustainability Advocates to Turns Scraps into Delicious Dishes in Innovative Cookbook

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Professor Jetty Chung-Yung Lee (second from the right, front row), Associate Professor (Teaching) at HKU School of Biological Sciences, leads a team dedicated to tackling food waste. Their cookbook demonstrates how science can transform discarded ingredients into nutritious meals, encouraging healthier eating and sustainable living.

Food waste is a pressing global issue with significant environmental and health impacts. In Hong Kong, 3,437 tonnes of food are sent to landfills every day — accounting for 30% of the city's total waste. The hospitality sector alone contributes 778 tonnes daily. But what if food waste could be transformed into something healthy and valuable?

The School of Biological Sciences (SBS) at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) has taken a science-driven approach to this problem. Through detailed analysis, the SBS Food and Nutritional Science team identified nine commonly discarded kitchen scraps — such as cucumber peels, leek tops, lemon peels, onion skins, leftover pasta and rice, tea leaves, and overripe cherry tomatoes, that are not only edible but rich in nutrients. The team advocates for a sustainable method of food consumption and has uncovered hidden nutrients in food waste that may support gut health and reduce inflammation.

Recognising the potential of upcycling food waste to improve public nutrition, the team translated these scientific findings into practical solutions. The result is a new cookbook, *Conscious Cooking – Asian Delights*, developed in collaboration with sustainability NGO GREEN Hospitality and food-saving app CHOMP as part of the third phase of the *Food Waste to Good Taste* initiative, funded by HKU Knowledge Exchange.

This Asian-inspired cookbook features 20 original recipes, including contributions from HKU students and nine celebrated Hong Kong chefs who share the passion for reducing food waste. The recipes showcase how food scraps can replace traditional ingredients in Asian dishes, and how scraps often tossed aside can be creatively reimagined into nutritious, delicious meals.

‘Food waste is one of the most pressing issues of our time,’ said Professor Jetty Chung-Yung LEE, Associate Professor (Teaching) at HKU School of Biological Sciences, who leads the project. ‘We’ve discovered that many ingredients often thrown away by households are actually packed with nutritional value. This cookbook showcases how science can help reduce waste, encourage healthier eating and inspire sustainable living, while also changing the way we view and value food waste.’

Beyond the cookbook, the SBS team also worked with food service providers to modify existing menus using nutrient-rich food scraps — bringing science-based, sustainable nutrition directly to consumers, and offering both qualitative and quantitative advantages to the food and beverage industry.

The cookbook was officially launched on June 6, bringing together culinary professionals, academics, and sustainability advocates. The event featured cooking demonstrations, food tastings, and a panel discussion. Speakers included Professor Kam Sing WONG, GBS, JP, HKU Adjunct Professor and former Secretary for the Environment; Professor Qiang ZHOU, HKU Dean of Science; and Professor Alice WONG, HKU Associate Vice-President (Research) and Chair Professor of the School of Biological Sciences. This initiative not only addresses the urgent issue of food waste but also enriches the culinary landscape by introducing a sustainable, health-focused approach to food preparation and consumption in Hong Kong.

Behind the scenes content with the chefs can be viewed here: <https://www.instagram.com/foodwastetogoodtaste>

About The Food Waste to Good Taste Project

Food Waste to Good Taste began in 2022 with educational and student innovation seminars to raise awareness about Hong Kong’s food waste problem. In time, the project has evolved to include hands-on workshops for F&B practitioners, providing them with practical skills and knowledge to minimise waste in their operations. The ‘Conscious Cooking – Asian Delights’ cookbook marks a milestone that hopes to make more of the general public aware of Hong Kong’s food waste problem, and inspire them to take action at home, work and when dining out.

<https://www.ke.hku.hk/assets/SI/2223/SI69.pdf>

About HKU Knowledge Exchange: <https://www.ke.hku.hk>

About GREEN Hospitality: <https://www.greenhospitality.io>

About CHOMP: www.chomphk.com

About Foodlink Foundation: <https://foodlinkfoundation.org>

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Images download and captions: <https://www.scifac.hku.hk/press>



Chef Barry Quek's 'Dry Assam Lemon Noodles' turns the often-overlooked lemon peel into a star ingredient, creating a dish that's both zesty and sustainable.



In her 'Dragon Well Tea Shrimp', Chef May Chow masterfully blends the earthy elegance of tea leaves with the delicate sweetness of shrimp, reimagining a timeless classic.



Chef Samaira Kavatkar's 'Thayir Sadam' is a vibrant celebration of how simple leftover rice can be elevated into a creamy, tangy dish bursting with flavour.



Chef Krzysztof Czerwinski's 'Tofu Tzatziki' proves that even cucumber peels can shine, adding a refreshing twist to this creative and sustainable appetiser.