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What's cooking: Jonathan Bloom talks food waste at Powell's Books, food buying clubs in Portland, chip brands compared

Published: Wednesday, March 09, 2011, 5:00 PM Updated: Thursday, March 10, 2011, 9:22 AM

By Leslie Cole, The Oregonian

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Gas prices are spiking, budgets are shrinking, what's an enthusiastic cook to do? We offer a few ideas.

1. Waste not.



Go hear **Jonathan Bloom**, author of "American Wasteland," when he visits **Powell's Books Thursday at 7:30 p.m.**, his last stop on a 3-city tour of what he calls "The Compost Coast." Bloom, a journalist based in North Carolina, examines the roots of our throwaway culture, where roughly half of our harvest ends up in landfills or rots in the field. That's not only horrifying, but unsustainable. "Current rates of waste and population growth can't coexist much longer," he writes. The good news is that we can change things as individuals and as a culture, and Bloom tells how **(we'll start with these 17 uses for stale bread)**.

2. Join the club.

While we're talking food scarcity, we're pleased to share a **list of Food Buying Clubs around Portland** compiled by **NeighborhoodNotes.com**. Buying clubs, where households pool order for food products and buy them direct from wholesalers or farmers, can help families trim grocery bills and also provide access to food in the city's so-called "food deserts," where grocery stores and farmers markets are scarce. Check them out, and if you're so inclined, start one of our your own.

3. Throw up your hands and eat chips.

And when you do, don't forget to log on to **HealthCastle.com**, a web site offering health comparisons of all kinds of foods, including 40 top brands of potato chips. **NPR's Health Blog writes about the site**, on which dietitians lay bare the facts on calories, fat, fiber and sodium in everything from Pringles to PopChips. But rather than counting up grams, says HealthCastle's founder Gloria Tsang, it's better to just get your hand out of the bag. "The first thing to do is try to have smaller portions," Tsang says. "We don't pay attention to what we're doing when we're eating chips and we easily overeat."

— Leslie Cole, follow me on Twitter

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