



Monica Chamberland reaches for the yogurt that is passed to her by Graham Jackson. Monica and Graham have been dumpster diving for years. It is an intentional lifestyle choice to help lessen the impact of food waste and fight the Western culture of overconsumption.



About 40 percent of food produced each year in Canada gets thrown out. This is just some of what Monica and Graham reclaimed from their dive.



Graham Jackson prepares the chicken he dumpster dived. Items he dives are still good to eat but may be past the best before date. Jackson wishes to educate people that the best before date is usually just a safe period set by health Canada but many products are still good beyond that date.



Monica Chamberland walks to a hidden dumpster in search of reclaimable items. Diving is something she is passionate about. She believes that world hunger is not a problem of quantity but rather, a matter of distribution.



Friends gather at Graham's house to enjoy a meal of dumpster dived food. The blue plates on the table were also reclaimed through dumpster diving.

# A Shift in Paradigm

PHOTOS AND STORY BY AMANDA CHEUNG



Everything used to prepare the chicken, including the spices have been reclaimed through dumpster diving.

As I sat waiting in the van beside fresh red peppers, bags of milk, boxes of salad, apples and potatoes, items of an earlier dive, an employee makes his way to the hungry green bins with large transparent bags waiting to be fed.

"This is the freshest dived food you'll ever have," joked Graham Jackson to Monica Chamberland and I.

This was my first experience ever dumpster diving.

I watched as Graham lifted the lid off the dumpster and threw his body in, leaving just his legs shooting straight into the air.

"I only ever work out for the sake of diving!" came Graham's muffled voice from inside.

I watched as Graham's hand awkwardly came out of the bin with bags of salted caramel popcorn, cartons of eggs and containers of yogurt, his body still consumed by the dumpster.

There was an unsaid system established.

As Graham reached for the food, Monica would put them in the reusable bags they had brought with them.

As I continued observing this, I noticed a big label on the side of the dumpster, white with green lettering which stated 'think green.'

What irony I thought to myself. Here I am witnessing the retrieval of food, still good for consumption from a bin that's telling us to 'think green.'

Graham and Monica have dumpster dived for years. It is one of the ways in which they have chosen to live their lives intentionally and sustainably.

They believe that by reclaiming food, perfectly edible food, save for a deformed shape or a few bruises, that they can do their small part in reducing food waste in the world.

Dumpster diving is a term given for modern day urban foraging where individuals search and reclaim items in dumpsters like clothing, furniture or food. The practice is to lessen the impact of waste.

"World hunger is not a problem of quantity, it's a matter of distribution," says Monica.

It is a disturbing fact that one in eight families in Canada struggle with putting food on the table when the Department of Agriculture estimates that by recovering just five per cent of food that is wasted, four million people could be fed.

According to the Value Chain Management Centre (VCMC), it's estimated that \$31 billion worth of food is wasted in Canada each year, a 15 per cent increase from their 2010 report.

Food waste is a growing problem in Canada and around the world.

Graham says that people need to have a paradigm shift. It's not just about going to the dumpster and reclaiming the food that's already been thrown out, but how do we start with the ways we make choices in our own homes and kitchens?

"It's not ideally what we want to eat but rather what should be eaten first," says Graham. That's not to say that all desires and wants of what to eat get disregarded. Graham gives an example of reclaiming sour cream. If that is going bad first, you don't just say I'm going to eat all the sour cream. Rather, it's about making reasonable choices but realizing a shift in thinking needs to be made.