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AN APP THAT FINDS A NEARBY HOME FOR UNWANTED FOOD

 FOOD & DRINK

Users download the Olio app, snap photos of any food items that they don't want and add them to the app's listings

Spotted: Would you be surprised to learn that around €850 billion worth of food is wasted annually, making a food-waste mountain that weighs 1.3 billion tonnes? Tessa Clarke was not, especially after she packed up her apartment in Switzerland to move back to the UK and was struck by the fact that she could not find anyone to give her leftover food to. In response, she teamed up with fellow Stanford MBA grad Saasha Celestial-One and started Olio.

The premise of Olio is simple: users download the app, then snap photos of any food items that they don't want and add them to the app's listings. Users nearby receive alerts and can request the items. Pick-up is arranged by private messaging. According to Olio, 50 per cent of all food listings added to the app is requested in less than two hours.

In addition to food, Olio users can also offer non-food items. Around 1 million people have signed up to use the app in 46 countries, sharing around 1.2 million portions of food. The company was started with just €45,000 from the partners' savings, but has now raised nearly €7 million from angel investors and venture capitalists and is planning to expand internationally.

As well as individuals, a large number of businesses also donate food via the app each week. **Says Celestial-One:** "I was extremely shocked to realise that actually well over half of all food waste in the UK takes place in the home, with the average UK family throwing away £800 of food each year that could have been eaten, collectively adding up to £15bn! But I was also excited, because whilst we are half of the problem of food waste, it also means we can be half of the solution – which is exactly what OLIO aims to be."

Waste of all kinds is a huge, and growing problem. That is why, at Springwise, we have seen a growing number of innovations that aim at reducing waste. Recent efforts have included a “leather” made from [seafood shells](#) and coffee grounds and a blockchain marketplace that rescues [fabric waste](#) from landfills.

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Website: olioex.com

Takeaway:

Olio’s founders believe that the app’s success has been bolstered by the rapidly changing attitudes towards waste since the site began four years ago. More and more, people are realising the importance of a sustainable lifestyle. With a purported 66 tonnes of food being thrown away every minute, it will take more than an app to solve the problem, but Olio is a way to get people to begin to change their behaviour towards food waste. It works best in big cities, as it requires a large number of users who live close to each other, but as it becomes more popular, the app has also started taking off in smaller towns. We hope that one day we will all be using it or something like it.