



“What a fucking waste!”

STORIES FROM THE DUMPSTER



HYSTERIA OVER CLEAN-LIVING

CONTRIBUTORS

WHO ARE WE?

This zine was made by a group of dirty-living queers, dumpster divers, mutual aiders, and activists on stolen land in naarm, melbourne.

with thanks to Alys, Elk, Gali, Hari, Jordan, Lauren, Bec, Lil, Richard, Rhys, Emori, Patches, Sab, Somer, Oli & the two Willows

we made this zine to introduce people to dumpstering, to share skills, and as part of research by one of us about the sensory experiences and ecologies of the dumpster

BACKGROUND

This zine was collectively created as part of a Masters project undertaken by Willow Ross, called 'Breaking bread with binchickens'.

Some of the text here is in quotes – these quotes are from interviews that were part of this Masters project. Everything is our collective words and thoughts.

For more on this project, contact Willow at willow.ross@student.unimelb.edu.au

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This zine was collaged, cut, pasted, and dreamed up on stolen Wurundjeri Country, part of Kulin Nation land in the south-east of so-called australia. this land is stolen land. when we rescue food from the bins of this continent, it is food that has been grown, processed or thrown away on land that has never been ceded. land with a long history of sustainable food production, interrupted 250 years ago by British invasion.

we pay our respects to the Wurundjeri, whose murnong patches flowered and continue to flower along the Merri Merri creek near where this zine was made, and to their Elders who pass down knowledge about plants, place and resistance. We say that this is stolen land; that sovereignty was never ceded; that no legitimate treaty has ever been signed; and we continue to fight for land back. Always was, always will be

OUTRAGE!

THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN

Our food system relies on waste. No, really. The average supermarket throws away tonnes of perfectly edible food every year, because keeping bruised, weird-shaped, slightly expired, damaged or excess food around would affect their bottom line.

Supermarkets are all lights, sterile, economical and warehousy, like a factory. The experience of shopping is purposefully manufactured and (especially in poor neighbourhoods) the food itself is often lacking in nutrition. Choice architecture pushes us to walk past the junk food on our way to the milk. Sales heavily discount ultra-processed foods. Nothing in there exists to feed us – it exists to generate profit.

THERE'S ENOUGH ALREADY!!!

Globally, the food producers of the world already grow enough to comfortably feed everybody. But that food doesn't get to all of those mouths.

Because our food system is built around getting people to buy things, rather than offering healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate food at a fair price (or for free), people miss out. We have so much **stuff** but so many people go underfed – and we use so much packaging and supplies and energy and CO2 just to *sell it better*.

TODDLER TANTRUMS

"the ways that people treat food when it becomes garbage"

"Kind of that capitalist attitude the kids who are like, if I can't play with my toys then no one gets to."

When a system is intentionally bad because it doesn't want any other way to be better, it's enraging. And that's how we see the broader system – kind of like a capitalist toddler tantrum. If they can't have it, nobody can. So we take it.

EXCESSIVENESS

BUILT-IN

WASTEFULNESS

"I walk into a supermarket and I'm like: Good God I would rather dumpster dive."

the

GROOS

Some of our time spent in or around the bin can get pretty disgusting. But that's part of it! So we're getting into all the squelchy detail here.

Imagine thick slices of **An unusual cream.**

contaminating your nose

TEXTURES

- The feeling of soft vegetables when you forget gloves
- Rotten fruit skins
- Soft bin grime
- Sticky hands after a dive
- Blood in meat bags
- Puffed up packaging feels nice but weird

RATS, MICE, RODENTS

There's nothing worse than opening a bin to find rats looking back. But we have to be considerate of our bin-diving comrades. Rats, mice, rodents – just give them a moment and they'll make themselves scarce.

Beware – one of our friends picked up a heavy bag of promising goods which turned out to be dead, poisoned rats. You'll see rats traps everywhere. Always wear gloves!

Odour



Hot Tip - Clean your hands on white bread! There's always plenty around.

Do we sign our death warrant?

the smell lingers on your hands.



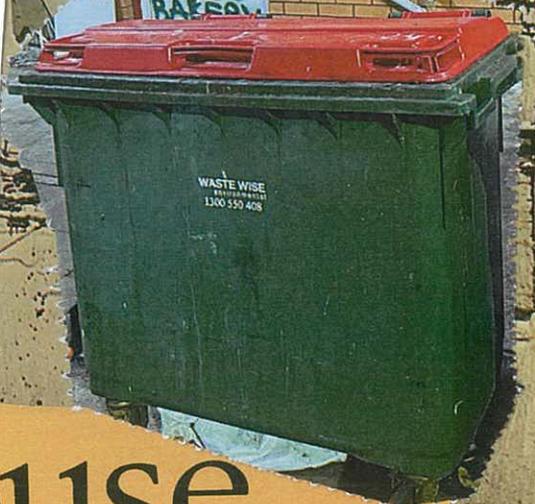
Odor

- SMELLS OF THE ORGANICS BIN**
- Mixture of hay, garden, leaves
 - Sometimes the nicest smell
 - Juice at the bottom (in old bins)
 - Yeasty – Horsey
 - Always a soft watermelon in there
 - Smells like sweet ripe fruit
 - Off spinach smells like chlorine

SMELLY CARS & HOMES

Smells follow you from the bin to your car, house, and fridge. Wash your haul when you get home! Some people embrace the stink – if you don't want to wash everything, that's up to you.

"One time, I got prawn juice on my sister's backseat. No washing that out." "Spilt milk is not a good combination with old cars." "The steering wheel gets sticky if you forget to rinse your hands."



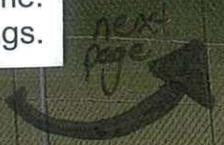
the whole house,
not just one room.

WATCH OUT FOR CONTAMINATION

- Glass and sharp objects end up in the bin – be careful when grabbing and jumping
- Raw meat should never touch vegetables – avoid, avoid, avoid
- Yoghurt spills get everywhere – bring some paper wipes or wash it off at home
- Melted ice cream – same deal
- Bleach and oil – the worst places will pour these in. Always use your nose.

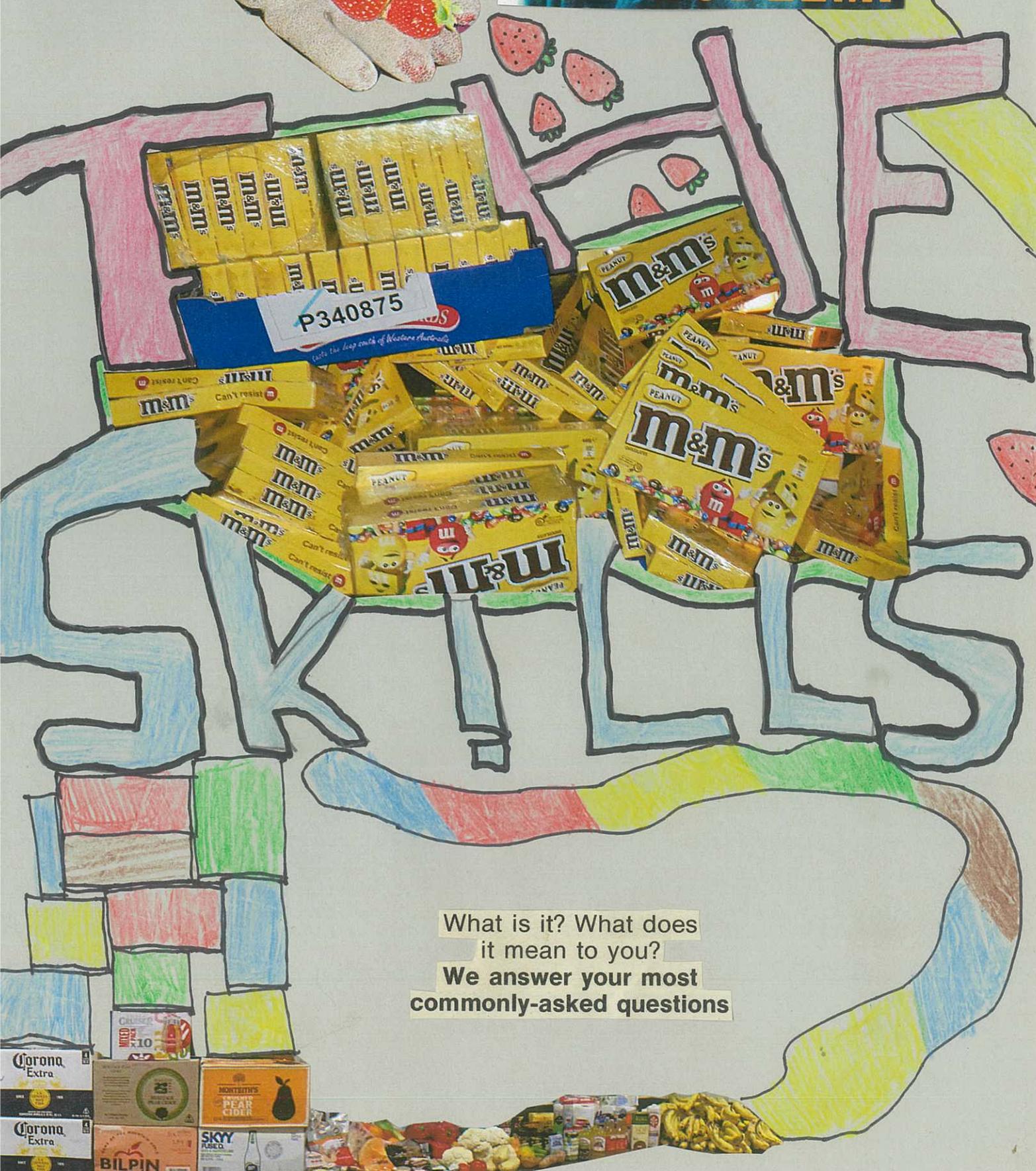


Dumpster diving is easy. But skills in dumpstering are things you build up over time. Below, we put together a list of our most common 'I wish I knew this at the start' things.



A hand holding two strawberries, positioned at the top left of the page.

**NO TRICKS, NO FUSS,
NO PROBLEM:**



What is it? What does
it mean to you?
**We answer your most
commonly-asked questions**

Take a tip from me:

The helpful -but- not -100%- necessary- list - of - dumpstering - skills

DO IT YOURSELF

ASK A FRIEND

preparations to improve results

The-helpful-but-not-100%-necessary-list-of-dumpstering-skills

- Dive with a friend
- Scout out locations in your neighbourhood at night; check behind popular supermarkets and grocers. Servos, bakeries, warehouses, pet shops are fair game
- Persistence is key; dumpstering is like digging for gold
- Get practice at conversing with managers/security etc. You can de-escalate a situation by offering to clean up your mess, put things back, or getting their pity
- Ferment! Be agent 007 of funky foods. You can turn nearly-off cabbage, onion, carrot, cucumber, beans and more into pickles. Invite your friends, make it a party
- Innovate ways to open skips/dumpsters – sometimes you don't need a key. Tools, timing, and local tips all help
- Have courage in the face of the gross (see previous page)



THE RUSH

anaconda bins as well, they were really good. ~~_____~~, you just never know what you're going to find.

Really, really good finds

Sometimes, you get **the rush**. It's hard to describe. You can't get it at the supermarket. You gotta get in the bin, you gotta find it. But we can tell you about it here.

"5kg of honey"

"An airfryer"

It's the moment where you find those ingredients you've been hoping for all week. When you find that bunch of carrots you wanted. Or your nose gets a whiff of basil. Or you find an entire slab of Peroni Reds or MnMs or chocolate mud cakes. It's the rush. You just never know what you're going to dig out. These are the moments when we get the rush, a hit of dopamine from pulling what you need out of the chaos of discard.

"25kg of flour"

cool:  so fucking 



"Fancy German kranskies"

THE DUMPSTER GODS

Do all dumpster divers pray to the dumpster gods? We believe they do. But some of us deeply believe that dumpster diving is a mystical experience. The gods are part of the ecology.

What to do?

1. Give back to the dumpster gods.
2. Give thanks.
3. Be grateful for your finds.
4. Be mindful of the dumpsters – each has a spirit.
5. Be faithful. Don't shop at the supermarkets too much.

Followers of the dumpster gods also really recommend this podcast: *'The Kind Nudibranch and the Garbage Witch Explore the World and Share It With You'*.

SPONTANEOUS ENCOUNTERS

These are the moment you run into your friends, make new friends, get a gift from a supportive worker, or meet some curious nonhumans. Some divers find furniture. Others find community in the bin – a few of us met at a northside dumpster back in early 2023.

The community and the rush of dumpstering are good examples of why some solutions or actions some things are more of a hack than a solution. Dumpstering hacks open our food system, gets us fed, makes community, and fuels us to keep working the big problems.

WHAT TO DO WITH ANGRY STAFF



What are you going to say?

De-escalate. Use your skills to defuse the situation by offering to leave, clean up after yourself, or explain what you're doing. Be calm and friendly. Correct myths about diving.

Film. If you think things are heading south, film them. This usually makes people moderate their actions and act more calm.

Tell them more about dumpstering. Staff might actually be interested in dumpstering too. Supermarket workers are underpaid too, and might be curious about how you get by. Share tips and facts with curious passers-by, share this zine.

Avoid getting trapped! Watch out for bins in cages or narrow laneways with only one exit. If staff show up this can be risky. Make a plan to leave fast beforehand!

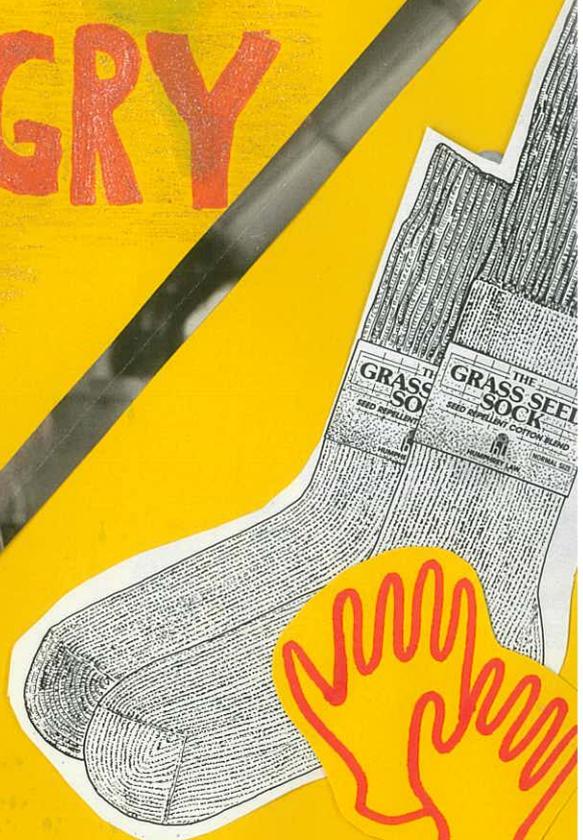
Establish a conversation. Try open a conversation with staff around dumpstering. Managers can be inflexible, but workers might tell you when their manager clocks off & how to avoid lights, cameras, etc.

STAFF TIPS



WELL I'M GLAD YOU'RE SO CONCERNED

- I WONT HAVE TO WORRY!



Gloves

(If you want to get fancy)

Light / torch

Keys to bin locks
- or spanner for lock bits

Sanitiser

DENIM does

clothes to get dirty

the dirty work

BOOTS

→ Helpful but often unnecessary

CLEAR

"It's bin chicken paradise."

critters



- OUR MASCOTS
- Bin chicken
 - Rats
 - Seagulls
 - Bugs (maggots)
 - Alley cats
 - Pigeons

Who (else) lives off the bin?

It would be unfair of us to make this zine and not talk about the other kinds of dumpster divers.

So many other urban critters live rich and storied lives in and around the bin. And we run into them all the time. Sometimes they even rock up to our mutual aid markets. These are their stories...



"A pigeon has wandered in and is currently cleaning up the bread crumbs and grains of rice on the floor. A crowd of adoring anarchist queers gather around: "do you think it knows it's at a market?" "she's doing mutual aid!" "I've heard he cleans up every week"

"What would you call it, like professional respect. Like 'Oh yes, fellow dumpster diver, I see, good luck I will leave you to it. I see this one is taken'. You know that kind of mutual understanding I would hope—we're of a kind, birds of a feather."

"Yeah like when I bring home bread or we have extra rice or carby things, my partner will go and put them out for the birds... he'll put out a little blanket in the backyard and lay it out for them."

"Binchickens – our mascot. Each day, they perch on bins, disrupt picnics, and forage in nearby brownfields. I've heard from a friend, also a participant in my research project, that the largest flock of binchickens in Victoria live around the back of the Coles at Healesville Walk"

sophisticated

creatures

In search of excellence



"I mean I've always been quite friendly with all those kind of creepy crawlies, I'm not really scared of rats or mice or anything like that. I only really counted them as like quite positive things, and yeah we just kind of like try not to scare them and just get them out of there."

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?
... & Breakfast ... & Lunch

HELPING US FIND GOOD, SAFE FOOD

Bin critters help us all the time – even if we don't realise it. You can work with non-humans to make your dumpster diving easier, better, and more caring. These are just some examples:

- Bugs – we maggots, fruit flies and worms tell you which meat, fruit and veg is truly past its prime. Lots of us around a bin? You're probably going to have a bad time.
- Mould/fungi – we might not look like your average dumpster diver, but they're everywhere. Citrus mould is a common sight in the bin and helps us differentiate the newer fruits from the old ones. Same with cheeses and breads, and even yoghurt. Look out for us!
- Bacteria – we're here and we're queer. we come in all shapes and sizes and can be found on pretty much everything. you don't always have to worry about us – just make sure you wash us off things first. But if you're a meat-eater, we can help you out. Look for blue/grey discolourations or excess air in meat packages – that's us.
- Mammals, rodents, birds – helpful? If you're lucky. We're your fellow dumpster divers. We take food from the bin and share it amongst ourselves, teaching each other the best methods for diving – just like this zine. If you see a lot of us, you can bet that the bin is active and pretty messy. Look at for nests, rat traps, and of course binchicken shit. Please remember to share and leave the bin open, if you can.

When we go diving, we try to have **care for the non-human critters we run into**. We have a level of respect for critters that are doing what we're doing. Some things you can do is try not to scare them, gently remove and look after any animals stuck in the bin, and maybe put out some food for the creatures living around the bin.

Who (and what) is dumpster diving in your home town? Fill in the gaps with your own examples of waste critters living in your city.

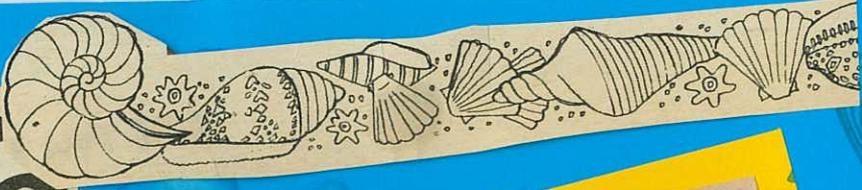
I have noticed...

I share my waste with...



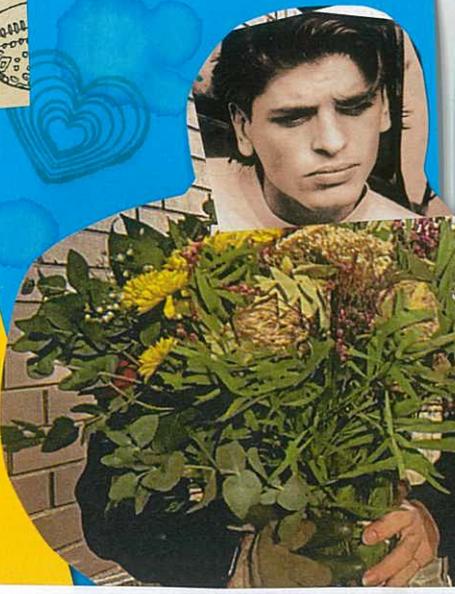
"That cat was hanging out, near those bins, and there was something so perfect for that cat inside that bin that it would really like to eat—and it couldn't! Equal parts because we threw it away—but also because it doesn't have opposable thumbs and couldn't open it."

A handsome, fascinating hottie



The

highs



So there are lows, but there are plenty more highs to begin to describe them all, but these are some of what you might expect or be inspired by...

CATALYST REALLY REALLY FREE MARKET

A free grocery shop gathering food to redistribute to the wider community

When: Every Wednesday 11am-5pm
BYO reusable grocery bags

At Catalyst Social Centre
1146 Sydney rd, Coburg

Followed by a free dinner at 7pm by Food Not Bombs
catalystcentre.net

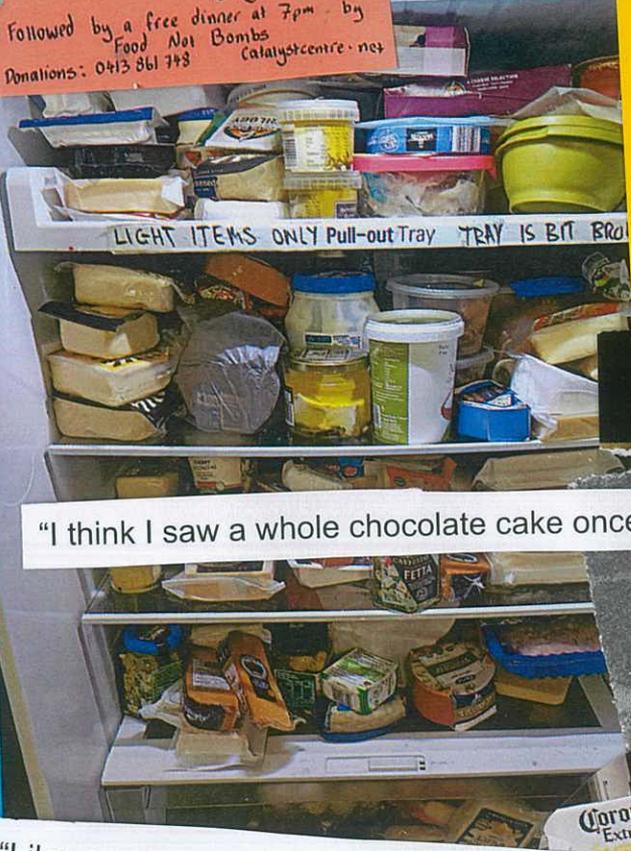
Donations: 0413 861 773



- Good finds
- Nice workers & their care & friendliness
- Social diving with friends
- Giving to others & sharing
- Dumpster meals
- Skill learning
- Feeding pets
- Rescuing heaps of food
- Cake drop-offs



Come and be 'c'
 130
 big



LIGHT ITEMS ONLY Pull-out Tray TRAY IS BIT BRO

Cool Reward.

"I think I saw a whole chocolate cake once."



"Like, seven or eight slabs of different types of drinks, like wines and ciders."



OUR BES

A good tomorrow starts tonight

"She's a freegan dog"

GENEROUS CUTS

REALLY REALLY FREE

"Mutual aid is a verb!"

to dumpster diving. We can't even of our favourites. Some things you

PLUS... MUTUAL AID

- Such a big part of dumpstering
- The reason many of us do it
- Social connection
- Really Really Free Market
- Food pantries
- Catalyst Social Centre
- Squats + sharehouses
- Food Not Bombs
- Feeding organising meetings

WINNER

one of the family'

The model of mutual aid is to blur the lines between giver and reciever. At different times, all of us are in need of things and able to offer things.

eating change

Fresh is the flavour

"the more small simple things that draw people together and that make them realise big things about the broader system."

Simple and fast

FREE BREAKFAST

T-EVER DIET



Bin

SLUT

Off fish

"She responds angrily, and threatens to call the police. We try to de-escalate and lea



CRO

Like, once I got there the guy came out and asked me to get out of bin—which I did, and then I grabbed my box of stuff that I had dug pretty fuckin deep for and was unwilling to let go. And they said that I wasn't gonna be able to take it."

Supermarket worke

"So it was one of those cage gated bin areas—he tried to like, lock me in there and said he was going to call the cops. But I got out, I like just sort of ran out. But O thought that I was still in the bin when he looked and was freaking out. It was pretty funny. And scary."

THE LO

Dumpster diving isn't all sunshine and rainbows

To give an honest reflection of our experience dumpstering. If you're looking for tips to get past Workers' and Skills pages.

The gross dumpsters

Waiting hours for loading trucks to leave

the image barrier on a voyage of self discovery

"And he was like because we're police and they like pulled badges out and they stuck the sirens on top of the vehicle on, and he was like "and we caught someone racking bread from here earlier" and like pointed to the bin."



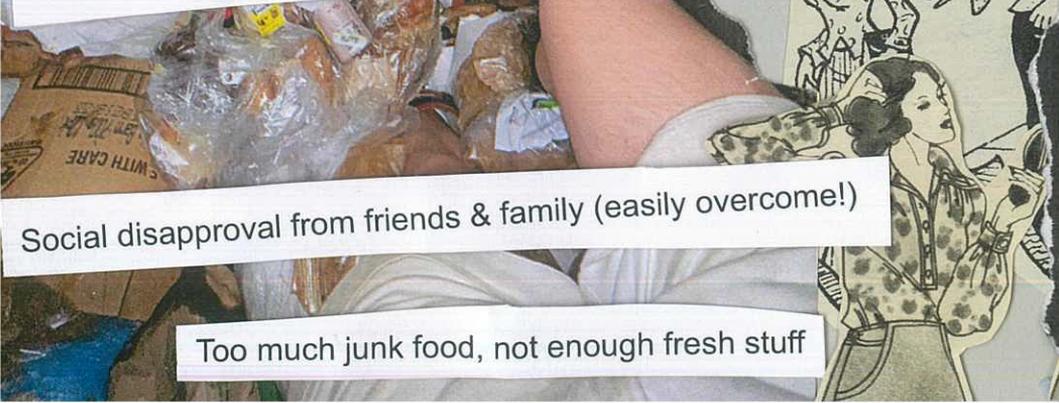
"I used to now it's lik

Social disapproval from friends & family (easily overcome!)

Too much junk food, not enough fresh stuff



aid by three
the Company
TO APPLY



"I opened the dumpster for a friend and was just like... someone had laid a turd there on the top. Like a full turd, and it's human and it's fresh."

RELIABILITY

Supermarket workers sabotaging food with bleach, oil, or cleaning products

Also loving all the packaging waste because it keeps our food clean

ave quickly."

rs mixing raw meat & veg

thighs

yum

SPECIFIC AREAS SUBJECT TO CELLULITE

Risky meat

While regular fat can be found anywhere on the body, cellulite appears to "prefer" the following areas indicated:

Seeing all the packaging waste that comes out of supermarkets

OWS

back parts of thigh

Inside the knees

Stomach

Confrontations with supermarket workers

Lower back

Ankles

Inside and back of upper arms

ces, here are some of the lows of them, see the 'What To Do With Angry

Surprisingly spoiled food that you only discover at home



freak out, go home and be like that's it for dumpster diving. But like, the truckies don't mind. Usually the workers don't mind."

SPECIAL!

Being harassed by cops

"My father, dedicating himself to eating every cent's worth of his meal, received a pink meringue instead of a blue one for dessert"



ABLAZE WITH COLOR

CLOSING

the
lid

opens new doors

AH... BINSPIRATION..

Ok, so now you're ready to dive. Or maybe you already have, and you wanted to revisit this or hear some new stories. Whatever your reason, thanks for reading.

You're in good hands when you go **diving**

SOME FINAL TIPS

Share skills – be a mentor. There's always someone who wants to learn to dumpster dive. If you're that person, ask your friends!

Share key copies – some people have keys to bins. What else can we say? Share copies.

Share this zine! Photocopy, print, download, whatever you need to do! This zine is self-published and open to anyone. Please distribute freely – just don't make money off it.

Clean up your mess – when you finish diving, put everything back and don't leave any mess behind. Treat it like your own pantry. It kind of is?

Close the lid – and put the lock back when you're done. It's that simple – it keeps the security off our backs and keeps things clean.

view and download this zine online at: issuu.com/binchickenink/docs/whatafknwaste

"You will come soon?"

It's more than an alternative