

Defense Council created a great guide at:

<http://www.nrdc.org/land/forests/gtissue.asp>

It will help you choose the best paper products for your home. I personally chose to use Seventh Generation paper products.

Room by Room: The Kitchen

Eating Organic

Choosing organic foods is the best way to eliminate dangerous pesticides from your diet. Please read the chapter “The Yummy Tummy” for more information about purchasing organic foods.

Remember to rinse your vegetables and fruits and if necessary, peel them to remove the chemicals. Again, organic produce is best, because peeling removes a very large portion of the nutrients. It’s also important to wash foods such as cantaloupe and

watermelon, because when you cut them, you could pass bacteria and pesticides from the rind into the meat of the fruit, with the knife.

Use old t-shirts, socks and boxer shorts to dust and clean house. No one needs to know! Keep a bin of these rags in your kitchen and bath and use them to clean up instead of towels.

You can also try using cloth handkerchiefs instead of tissues.

Water and Power

Just like the bathroom, you can save water by installing faucet aerators. You can even go another step further and install a low water dishwasher. Make sure you wash your fruits and vegetables in a bowl, and fill your sink to wash and rinse dishes, instead of running the water. When you wash dishes in the dishwasher, wash only full loads and set the dishwasher to the shortest cycle necessary. Not everything needs to be washed on the heaviest setting. I like to turn on the dishwasher on my way out the door in the morning, so I put it on the air dry setting. It takes a little longer, but since I’m not home, it doesn’t matter. The air dry setting uses up less energy than heat dry.

By adjusting the temperature on your refrigerator and freezer, you can save money. Make sure your refrigerator temperature is set somewhere between 38 to 42 degrees Fahrenheit. Your freezer should be set between 0 and 5 degrees Fahrenheit. If your refrigerator has one, take advantage of the power-save switch. Just check your fridge's user guide to find out if you have one. If you lost your user guide, most manufacturers post them on the internet. You can make sure your fridge's door seals tightly by closing the door over a dollar bill. If that dollar bill slides easily with the door closed, then you need to replace the door gaskets.

Tap Water

Repeat after me: Bottled water is not healthier than tap water. In some cases, it can be worse than your tap water because it is not highly regulated. Bottled water is held only to the standards of the Food and Drug Administration, whereas tap water is held to the higher standards of the Environmental Protection Agency. If you are nervous, have your tap water tested and/or install a water filter. Water purifiers vary from \$10 carafes, to several hundred-dollar water softening systems. I find a filter that attaches onto the tap, to be the easiest to maintain.

Cookware

Perfluorochemicals, which are synthetic heat-resisting chemicals that are linked to several health problems, are found in non-stick cookware. The danger is found in scratched up pots and pans, the scratches allowing the chemicals to reach us. A better option is to use old-fashioned cast-iron cookware. It is durable, safe, and has been used for generations without ill effect. Used properly, it is naturally non-stick, and is even oven safe. Cast iron, however, works best on gas stoves. You can also try stainless-steel pans, or GreenPan, which sells non-stick pots and pans without the dangerous chemicals.

Soap

Antibacterial soaps may be causing more harm than they're worth because they allow bacteria to build up a resistance to them. Bacteria are mutating and becoming stronger. In addition, antibacterial soaps do not protect us from viruses, such as the cold or flu, which is why we are sick most of the time. Unless you have a poor immune system or have infants in the house, regular soap will work just fine. However, you can use a natural bacterial killing agent if you must. A few drops of tea tree oil mixed with water and sprayed on your countertops and children's toys, will kill off bacteria. Avoid anti-bacterial air fresheners, as they just add more chemicals into our already dirty indoor air.

Baggin' It

How many bags do you use and throw away in a given week? How about other containers like water bottles? Here are a few facts³⁹ to think about:

- Plastic bags and other plastic garbage thrown into the ocean kill as many as 1,000,000 sea creatures every year!
- Americans throw away 25,000,000 plastic beverage bottles every hour!
- Recycling plastic saves twice as much energy as burning it in an incinerator.
- Americans throw away 25,000,000,000 Styrofoam coffee cups every year.
- Plastic bags can take over 400 years to break down.
- Every month, we throw out enough glass bottles and jars to fill up a giant skyscraper. All of these jars are recyclable!
- The energy saved from recycling one glass bottle can run a 100-watt light bulb for four hours. It also causes 20% less air pollution and 50% less water pollution than when a new bottle is made from raw materials.
- A modern glass bottle would take 4000 years or more to decompose -- and even longer if it's in the landfill.
- If you had a 15-year-old tree and made it into paper grocery bags, you'd get about 700 of them. A supermarket could use all of

them in under an hour! This means in one year, one supermarket goes through 60,500,000 paper bags! Imagine how many supermarkets there are in the U.S!

Oi! Are you feeling a little guilty and overwhelmed? Do not fear there is much that you can do. Let's figure out reusable options for the types of containers/utensils we commonly throw away⁴⁰.

Water Bottles

Bottled water is not cleaner/safer than tap water. In fact, many brands of bottled water use regular city water as opposed to the magical spring water their names imply. The only difference is that the water is filtered at a private depot after it has been filtered by the city. If you have a soft water system or filter on your tap, you are essentially doing the same thing. That is why our dependency on gourmet water is redundant. Save yourself a ton of money and use a reusable water bottle. If you are concerned about the chemicals that plastic bottles (see caution) can give off, I recommend you use a stainless steel water bottle. Try Klean Kanteen (www.kleankanteen.com) or Sigg (www.mysigg.com) bottles. Prices range from \$5 to \$20.



Lunch Bags

Rather than using a paper or plastic bag to store your lunch in, how about getting a trendy reusable bag! My favorite is the Laptop style lunch box, which includes utensils, and reusable containers. It's an all-in-one system. You could also use a cloth bag. Lunch systems average \$20.

Sandwich Bags

Enter the Wrap-n-Mat, invented by a woman, and revolutionizing lunchtime! It's a placemat and sandwich container in one. It closes with a hook



Babes at Home

and loop fastener. You can probably use it for other foods as well such as pizza, cake, and other square shaped foods. The Wrap-n-Mat is plastic on one side and cloth on the other. Even though they are reusable, don't put it in the washing machine or dishwasher. Heat + Plastic = melted mess. Hand wash with soap and water and air dry.
\$6.95

Snack Containers

You can use Gladware to hold your snacks, invest in an all-in-one lunch system, or make a little bag out of some sturdy fabric.

Pyrex is a great option for those avoiding plastic. Depending on your style, containers range from \$2-10. Check out nubiousorganics.com for some cute options.

Plastic plates/bowls/utensils

Once again, all-in-one lunch systems include everything you need. If you don't want to purchase anything special, and have space at

work/school you can just leave a few things from home there. I've had plenty of office jobs, and I would always use the bottom drawer of my desk as my kitchen. I kept a plate, bowl, cup, utensils, and dish soap in there.

However, for the most part, the container I store my meal in, is the container I eat out of. No use in dirtying an extra plate is there!

Shopping Bags

European countries are way ahead of America in respect to shopping bags.

After college, I backpacked in Ireland for a few months. The first time I went grocery shopping I was confused when the cashier asked for my bag. They have plastic bags just like we do, but they charge .05 Euro per bag used. Most people use cloth bags that they bring from home. This

An Eco-Babe's Tip:

My sister and I keep supplies of canvas and other reusable bags in our cars. We use them wherever we shop. It's a little thing we do to help the environment.

– Melody, Math
Instructor, El
Dorado, KS

system of punishing waste and rewarding conservation has been in place for many years. It looks as though this is how things are going to be in the U.S. soon so you might as well switch now.

While many grocery stores now sell reusable bags, you don't have to purchase them there. There are many websites where you can buy trendy, colorful and even custom bags. Some people are even making them themselves! Visit my website at StephanieByng.com for links.

I had an entire cabinet full of plastic bags from grocery stores. I keep them to line my bathroom trashcan. Eventually, I just had way too many. That is when I found out that most grocery stores recycle plastic bags. Just look for the bin near the entrance!

Caution: Studies have shown that contaminants in plastic may get into our foods. A study by Consumer Reports⁴¹ showed that store-bought cheeses wrapped in Type 3 (PVC/Vinyl) plastic film contained high levels of a toxin linked to reproductive problems, birth defects, and liver tumors in mice. Do your homework before purchasing any plastic container. Avoid any that are made from Type 3 (PVC) or Type 7 (contains bisphenol-A [BPA]). Look on the bottom of the container for the number. If there isn't a number, don't buy it. Plastic wrap can also contain PVC. The safer choices are plastics 1, 2, 4 and 5⁴². This number can be found inside the chasing arrows recycle symbol. Play it safe for foods you will store at home and use glass. Avoid using plastic to heat up your food. Try glass or ceramic. Recycle plastic containers when they are old or scratched.

