

Eat Better, Eat Local

Quick. Open your fridge. Do you know where those carrots were grown? Or how far those apples traveled to get to your crisper? If your answers are “No,” it may be time to start thinking local.

On average, the food Americans eat travels 1,300 miles to get from farm to table. Not only does that long journey require loads of energy, but along the way your food loses valuable nutrients and flavor. Fortunately, you can cut your family’s food miles drastically simply by purchasing locally grown fruits and vegetables. Buying seasonal, local produce eliminates the damage caused by shipping food across the country, ensures that you’re supporting area farmers and your community, and allows your family to reap the health benefits of eating fresh, nutritious, and tasty produce. (Think crisper apples and more flavorful tomatoes.)

The best part? Eating local is easier than you might think. Farm stands, you-pick farms, farmers’ markets, and food cooperatives throughout the state sell fresh, locally grown fare, and many local supermarkets even stock a selection. With prime growing season just around the corner, it’s about time to fill your fridge with the best produce your state has to offer.

For more information about where to find locally grown produce in your area, visit www.localharvest.org.



Honey Lovin’

Fact or fiction: Consuming local honey helps prevent allergy flare-ups.

Fiction. Though many people believe that consuming local honey helps you build up a resistance to pollen (because bees ingest local plant pollen, which ends up in the honey), there is no scientific research to prove that the sweet stuff alleviates seasonal sniffing and sneezing. In fact, a study in the February 2002 *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology* concluded that people who were fed honey did not experience more allergy relief than those who were fed a placebo. But trying this natural remedy won’t hurt—honey contains vitamins and minerals and is a great immune system booster. Find local honey at www.honeylocator.com.



eco-terms defined...

Locavore.
A person who tries to eat only locally produced food (typically within a 100-mile radius of home).

try this today—

Take reusable shopping bags to the store to tote your groceries home rather than using disposable bags. Both paper and plastic require major resources for production—and most end up in landfills or litter the sides of the road after they’re used. With reusable shopping bags, such as canvas tote bags, you’re doing your part to reduce that waste.

5 Days (and \$100) to Energy Efficiency

Sometimes it seems like the only way to minimize your impact on the environment is to spend more. Build a green house. Drive a Prius. Spend \$200 for organic cotton jeans. Yikes.

Sorry, but that \$200 for organic cotton jeans—and then some—went to my heating bill last month.

To ease the burden on my pocketbook—and the environment—I’m on a mission to reduce my energy and water use. In fact, I decided to see how much I could slash my consumption in five days. The catch? I only budgeted \$100. Here’s what happened:

Monday

The first task is easy: I **unplug electronics and chargers I’m not using**. Today it’s my cell phone charger, a floor lamp, the toaster, and the coffee pot. And when I’m done on my computer for the day, I switch off the power strip so my electronics don’t keep sucking energy. **Cost: Free.**

Tuesday

Today’s step is slightly more labor-intensive. I’m going to **replace old lightbulbs with CFLs**. Three bulbs in my house have burned out in the past week, so I start there. It takes minutes, and once I clamber down from my stool, I’m ecstatic that I won’t have to replace these bulbs anytime soon, because Energy Star-qualified CFLs last at least 6,000 hours. (That means if they’re on three hours a day, they’ll work for more than five years!) **Cost: \$3 per bulb.**

Wednesday

This is the perfect opportunity to **minimize the number of “loads”** I do. Why? For starters, it’s laundry day. I don’t have an Energy Star washing machine (yet!), so I make sure I’m only washing full loads of clothes—in cold water—to cut back on water and energy use. And when it’s time

to tackle dirty dishes, I make sure the dishwasher is full before I run it. And I opt for the air-dry setting, which reduces energy consumption even more. **Cost: Free.**

Thursday

It’s time to kick this project up a notch. I head to my local home improvement store and **purchase a programmable thermostat**. Installing the thermostat is relatively easy, so I decide to handle the labor myself. Once I shut off the electricity, I set to work. About an hour later (handier souls probably could have this done in half an hour), my new thermostat is in place and programmed to automatically adjust to different day and night temps—no fiddling required. **Cost: \$25 to \$100—mine was \$60.**

Friday

I finish the week with a big splash—I’m going to **reduce water use in the bathroom**. First I order a low-flow showerhead online to replace my water-gushing model. Certain occupants of my house are concerned that low flow equals no flow, so I buy a massaging model to prove that low flow can be luxurious. **Cost: \$29.95** (although you can find models for as little as \$10).

The last part of my ultimate day of water saving involves the toilet. I can’t buy a new low flow model yet. But by placing a water-filled 1-quart plastic milk jug in the tank (with a few marbles to weigh it down), I use less water every time I flush. **Cost: Free**, once you drink a quart of milk.

After five days of work and \$98.95, I find myself racing to the mailbox to see if my utility bills have arrived yet. No, I’m not crazy. It’s just that I can’t wait to see how my hard work (yes, I know it wasn’t *really* that difficult) has paid off.

Because Kermit the Frog was wrong. It’s easy—and inexpensive—to be green after all.