

# Save Some Green by Going Green with Your Grocery Shopping

UNIVERSITY OF  
Nebraska  
Lincoln

EXTENSION

Lancaster County

444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A / Lincoln, NE 68528 / (402) 441-7180 / <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food>

by Alice Henneman, MS, RD, and Lorene Bartos, MS, Extension Educators

*“We cannot do everything at once, but we can do something at once.”*

*~ Calvin Coolidge, former United States President*

Perhaps you haven't yet started on recycling the many containers that package food purchases. And, maybe you have limited access to some of the “greener” food products on the market. Yet there are things you can do if you're interested in a “greener,” more environmentally friendly household. Read on for some easy steps you can take right now. They also will save you money, adding a little extra green to your wallet!



1. **Size matters.** When choosing between a large container and several small containers that add up to the same volume: Consider whether buying the large container would serve the same purpose and save you money? For example, do you really need to buy individual boxes (and more packaging) of juice if they all are drunk in the same week and at your kitchen table?
2. **It's in the bag.** While we could all carry our own reusable shopping bags when we go shopping, if we don't, we can reuse any plastic grocery bags we might accumulate to line small wastebaskets. Put a few bags in the bottom of the waste basket BEFORE you line it, so there's another one ready to use after one is filled.
3. **Gotta have a plan!** Plan ahead and shop less often for groceries or shop in conjunction with other errands taking you near a grocery store. The result is a reduction in the use and cost of fuel needed to transport food.
4. **Practice the 3 Rs.** Produce less waste AND save money by practicing the 3 Rs of reduce, reuse and recycle. Here are three examples in relation to throwing away leftover food. Not only does tossing leftovers waste money, it also wastes the energy resources and packaging materials associated with the tossed food.
  - **Reduce** the amount of leftover food tossed by serving smaller portions of foods that frequently produce leftovers OR ...
  - **Reuse** leftovers by serving them again in a day or two or freezing them for future use, OR ...
  - **Recycle** leftovers into a different type of meal; for example – add that extra rice to a soup the next night.
5. **Don't be a “spoil”-sport.** Throwing away spoiled food is related to tossing leftovers. Reduce the amount of spoiled food that gets tossed through such practices as:
  - Read labels for “use by,” “expiration,” or “best if used by” dates.

Page 1 of 2



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

- Refrigerate and freeze foods at recommended temperatures — 0 degrees F or lower for freezers and 40 degrees F or lower for the refrigerator section. An appliance thermometer assures your refrigerator/freezer is maintaining these temperatures.
- Follow recommended storage times for foods. For example, some containers may specify a recommended time frame in which to eat a food after it is opened.
- Avoid buying so much food in bulk that it spoils before you can use it.

6. **Drink to this.** Buy a reusable water bottle and fill it with tap water. Your investment soon will pay for itself.

7. **Bulk it up.** Some products purchased at the grocery store, such as hand soap, can be purchased in big bottles that are used to refill a smaller bottle size. Reduce the cost and the packaging by refilling the smaller bottle.

The next step: For more things you can do to live a greener lifestyle and reduce energy expenditures, visit the Environmental Protection Agency's Website and calculate your “carbon footprint” at

[www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind\\_calculator.html](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html)

### Related Topics:

- Use a Refrigerator and a Freezer Thermometer  
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/ciq-fridge-freezer-thermometer.shtml>
- Cleaning the Kitchen Cupboard: Toss or Save?  
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/CleaningCupboard.pdf>
- Freezing Prepared foods (includes cakes, pies, casseroles, etc.) (*University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service*)  
<http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/uga/FreezingPreparedFoods.pdf>
- Store It, Don't Ignore It  
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/storeitchart.pdf>
- Ingredient Substitutions  
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/ingredientsubs.pdf>