



Food to live by.

Powerful Ways to Sustain Yourself and the Planet

✓ I will eat more plants, less meat.

- A lot of people really like meat, but we'd be healthier — and so would the Earth — if we'd eat less of it.
- According to the [Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations](#),¹ the global production of animals for food is the single biggest source (about 18%) of human-generated greenhouse gas emissions — more than industry, transportation, or power generation. Turns out your most important “green lifestyle” choice isn't whether to drive a hybrid car or to change your light bulbs... it's how much meat you eat.
- Industrial feedlot meat production requires about 16 times more fossil fuel energy and generates about 24 times more CO₂ than production of the caloric equivalent of vegetables and rice. [The Center for the New American Dream](#)² calculated that for every 1,000 people who choose to eat a meatless meal once a week, we'll save 70,000 pounds of grain for human food use, prevent the erosion of 70,000 pounds of topsoil, and save 40 million gallons of water a year.
- Not all red meat is created equal. There are real benefits to raising cattle in natural conditions instead of concentrated feedlot operations. According to the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#),³ feedlots are organized according to the requirements of mechanical efficiency, creating significant environmental issues with waste confinement and overuse of antibiotics to fight disease; in contrast, well-managed grass-fed cattle roam on pasture in farm settings that are healthier for the animals and take advantage of the benefits cattle offer — like free fertilizer in amounts that the soil can safely absorb, which increases soil fertility and reduces erosion. Grass-fed cattle producers don't incur the financial and environmental costs of transporting grain long distances for livestock feed. Organic or not, grass-fed meat and dairy products are more likely to be antibiotic- and hormone-free; the meat is leaner, with [more omega-3 fatty acids](#)⁴ and conjugated linoleic acid (“good fats”) that can help reduce the risk of heart disease and strengthen the immune system. One way to reduce meat-related greenhouse gas emissions, then, is to [switch to more climate-friendly protein](#).⁵
- On average, Americans eat about 8 ounces of meat per day (roughly twice the global average) — that translates into about 200 pounds of meat, poultry, and fish per person every year, an increase of 50 pounds per person from just 50 years ago. Whenever you choose to eat meat, [it's healthier for your waistline and your budget to consume less](#).⁶ The USDA reminds us that a standard serving of meat is 4 ounces. Meat is also wonderful as a seasoning or highlight in dishes; it doesn't have to be the center of the meal. Check out some of our favorite [vegetarian](#)⁷ and [light-on-the-meat dishes](#)⁸ from our recipe database.

RELATED LINKS

¹United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM

²The Center for the New American Dream www.newdream.org

³The Union of Concerned Scientists www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/solutions/smart_pasture_operations/greener-pastures.html

⁴NRDC OnEarth Magazine www.onearth.org/article/graze-anatomy?page=all

⁵Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Media-Media/Newsbulletin-BulletinDeNouvelles_eng.asp

⁶New York Times article www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/dining/11mini.html?_r=1

⁷Earthbound Farm recipe archive www.ebfarm.com/Recipes/RecipeResults.aspx?keyword=Earth%20Day%20Vegetarian%20Favorites

⁸Earthbound Farm recipe archive www.ebfarm.com/Recipes/RecipeResults.aspx?keyword=Light-on-the-Meat%20Favorites

✓ I will choose organic produce.

- Organic farming helps keep harmful chemicals out of our soil, air, water, and food. It's grown without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, using sustainable farming methods that protect and enhance the health of the land. At Earthbound Farm, in 2009 alone our farming on 33,000 acres will keep more than 10.5 million pounds of synthetic chemicals out of the environment.
- Organic farming methods reduce water pollution and overall water use. Organic soil retains moisture more effectively, so organic farmers have to use less water on their crops. And because organic farms don't use synthetic fertilizers, they don't contribute to nitrate pollution of groundwater and waterways by conventional agricultural chemicals.
- Organic foods are [more nutritious](#).⁹ Research has found that average levels of 11 nutrients were 25% higher in organic foods compared to conventional. Eating organic produce and organic processed fruits and vegetables will increase your antioxidant intake by about 30% over conventional produce.
- If you can't go all organic, start with the foods that have the greatest impact. Earthbound Farm's handy [Pocket Guide to Choosing Organic](#)¹⁰ shows you which conventional fruits and vegetables are most likely to carry multiple pesticide residues — that's especially important for children, whose growing bodies are much more sensitive to pesticide exposures.
- Eating organic fruits and vegetables is a relatively simple and very effective way to reduce dietary pesticide exposure. Researchers at the University of Washington [tracked a group of local preschool children](#)¹¹ and found that when they switched to organic produce from conventional, evidence of pesticide residues in the children's bodies became undetectable almost immediately.
- Whether it's the result of the richer soil they grow in or increased nutrients in the plants themselves, organic produce [just tastes better](#)¹² than conventional — just ask people who choose organic produce, like the many high-profile chefs who are committed to serving organic foods in their restaurants.

✓ I will bring my own bags when I go shopping.

- We use more than [100 billion plastic and 10 billion paper shopping bags](#)¹³ in the US each year — the numbers are exponentially higher if you count bag consumption around the world. Every reusable bag we use saves resources, reduces pollution, and helps reduce costs (one of the reasons many stores offer shoppers a credit for using their own bag). So when the checker asks, "Paper or plastic," tell them you brought your own!
- If every person in America used their own reusable tote for just one shopping trip a week for a year — just one! — we could keep about 16 billion bags out of our landfills.
- Only a [tiny percentage](#)¹³ (1%-3%) of disposable plastic bags are actually recycled. The rest will persist in landfills or as dangerous trash in the environment forever. These bags litter the landscape, get tangled in and stunt the growth of trees, choke marine animals who become entangled in them or mistake them for food, and clog municipal water treatment facilities.
- Paper bags may seem intuitively more environmentally friendly, but they present their own problems. The volume of paper bags we use in the US accounts for the loss of [about 14 million](#)¹³ carbon-absorbing trees each year.
- A slightly larger percentage of paper bags ends up being recycled (10%-15%), but a [2007 study concluded](#)¹⁴ that the manufacture of 1,000 paper bags (with 30% recycled content) used more than 3 times more energy and 17 times more water, created 4 times more solid municipal waste, and generated twice as much greenhouse gas emissions in production and after disposal than did plastic bags that could carry an equivalent amount of goods.

RELATED LINKS

⁹The Organic Center www.organic-center.org/science.nutri.php?action=view&report_id=145

¹⁰Earthbound Farm Pocket Guide to Choosing Organic www.ebfarm.com/Products/PocketGuide.aspx

¹¹Seattle Post-Intelligencer www.seattlepi.com/local/349263_pesticide30.html

¹²The Organic Center www.organic-center.org/reportfiles/taste_2pagerx4.pdf

¹³ReusableBags.com www.reusablebags.com/facts.php

¹⁴Chemical & Engineering News article faculty.salisbury.edu/~bjzaprowski/GE0G%20141/Paper%20vs%20plastic.pdf



Food to live by.

✓ I will choose reusable or recycled instead of disposable.

- Post-consumer recycled content is the used paper, plastic, metal, and glass that we've all been recycling from our homes and businesses, turned into fresh paper, plastic, metal, and glass products. [Recycling helps conserve](#)¹⁵ resources, usually consumes far less energy than using virgin materials, and helps keep usable materials from becoming a waste or pollution problem.
- Producing recycled paper products generates 95% less air pollution and uses 80% less water and 65% less energy than producing virgin paper from trees. For every 4-foot-tall stack of office paper you recycle, you [save a tree](#).¹⁶
- Buying products made from recycled paper helps reduce the demand for virgin wood pulp, which means more forests are preserved. If every household in the US replaced just one roll of 120-count virgin-fiber paper towels with 100% recycled content towels, we could save [one million trees](#)¹⁷ this year alone.
- Most disposable paper coffee cups can't be recycled due to the coating applied to help them withstand the hot liquid, so they end up in the landfill. In 2006, Americans used and threw away an estimated [16 billion disposable coffee cups](#)¹⁸ — which consumed 6.5 million trees, created 253 million pounds of solid waste, wasted 4 billion gallons of water, and used more than 4.8 billion BTUs of energy to produce, enough to power 53,895 homes for a year. So bring your own cup when you can!
- The average student generates [67 pounds of trash](#)¹⁹ from their disposable lunches over the course of a year, which turns into waste destined for the landfill. It costs the school more to have that trash hauled away, too — money that could do a lot more good in the classroom. With the innovation and creativity beginning to pour into the design of safe reusable containers, bringing lunch from home is becoming more stylish and fun, and it can help save resources in more ways than one.

✓ I will eat sustainable seafood.

- Humans have long assumed that the ocean was an inexhaustible source of food and resources, that ocean species had a boundless ability to recover from exploitation. But according to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the world's catch leveled off at [just over 82 million metric tons](#)²⁰ of fish per year back in 1989. That's all the ocean can produce. And we're taking it all.
- "[Overfishing](#)"²¹ is the reduction of fish populations below a biologically and economically sustainable level such that the population can't replenish itself. Industrial-scale ocean fishing operations are changing the balance of marine ecosystems to the point that many species — especially the most commercially popular fish — have reached the brink of extinction. Unfortunately, threats to ocean species are difficult to perceive because marine animals aren't as visible to us as those on land. There are currently 1,372 marine species on the authoritative [International Union for Conservation of Nature's \(IUCN\) Red List of Threatened Species](#)²² (as of 5-15-06), but the IUCN itself estimates that it's been able to assess [less than 5% of species included](#),²³ and that better assessment would increase the list six-fold.
- Instead of addressing the problem of diminishing fish catches, governments have subsidized commercial fishing, allowing more and bigger boats to ply the high seas in pursuit of the dwindling supply of wild fish. Ironically, this [perverse incentive structure](#)²⁴ has actually put fishermen's livelihoods at risk, not to mention threatened the primary source of protein for some 950 million people worldwide.
- "[It's not illegal](#)"²⁴ to overfish in the United States," according to Mike Sutton, director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Center for the Future of the Oceans. "The fundamental issue is that what is legal [is] simply unsustainable."
- One of the best ways to remove the motivation for devastating fishing practices is to stop buying irresponsibly caught or farmed seafood. Know what you're buying at the market and what you're ordering at restaurants — authoritative, handy guides from the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch will help, and they're available in regional versions (for sushi, too) at [SeafoodWatch.org](#).²⁵

RELATED LINKS

¹⁵[The National Center for Appropriate Technology/Green Tree Project](#) www.ncat.org/greentree/recycled_1.html

¹⁶[I Love a Clean San Diego.gov](#) www.ilacsd.org/recycle/r_why.php

¹⁷[SeventhGeneration.com](#) www.seventhgeneration.com/Recycled-Paper-Towels

¹⁸[SustainabilityIsSexy.com](#) www.sustainabilityissexy.com/facts.html

¹⁹[LaptopLunches.com](#) www.laptoplunches.com/ideas.html#waste

²⁰[Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch](#) www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/sfw_of.aspx

²¹[Animal Welfare Institute](#) www.awionline.org/oceans/Fisheries/Destructive_Fishing.htm#Overfishing

²²[MarineBio.org](#) marinebio.org/Oceans/RedListSpecies.asp

²³[IUCNRedList.org](#) www.iucnredlist.org/static/programme#current_limitations

²⁴[Mongabay.com](#) news.mongabay.com/2007/0709-interview_mike_sutton.html

²⁵[Seafood Watch Regional Pocket Guides](#) www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/SeafoodWatch/web/sfw_regional.aspx



✓ I will break the disposable bottled water habit.

- According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Americans bought nearly [31 billion bottles](#)²⁶ of water in 2006, but nationally only about 10% of those bottles were recycled — resulting in the arrival of about 30 million plastic single-serving bottles in landfills every year.
- Incredible amounts of petroleum are consumed by the business of bottling water. According to the [Earth Policy Institute](#),²⁷ nearly a quarter of bottled water crosses national borders on its way to market (often adding to product cachet). Accounting for the estimated energy used for pumping and processing, transportation, and refrigeration, the annual bottled water consumption in the United States is responsible for using the equivalent of over 50 million barrels of oil — enough to run 3 million cars for a year.
- Most bottled water appears to be safe, but it's not necessarily any cleaner or safer than tap water. In fact, an estimated [25% or more](#)²⁸ of bottled water is really just tap water in a bottle. And we're paying a premium for it: bottled water costs as much as \$10 a gallon, yet no objective quality standards for bottled water exist. Nationally, local governments spend about \$43 billion a year to comply with strict federal water quality standards, yet most tap water costs less than a penny a gallon.
- Plastic water bottles have been the source of concern over the health effects of compounds like [bisphenol-A \(BPA\)](#)²⁹ leaching into the bottle's contents. Reusable bottles help avoid that problem; available from many retailers and online sources, they're stylish and functional for kids and adults, they work with many different kinds of beverages, and it's easy to find brands that contain no questionable compounds.
- If your local tap water has taste problems, you can drink filtered water and still maintain a relatively small environmental footprint. Filter systems are improving in quality, cost, and sustainability; for example, Brita filters can now be recycled via a new program in cooperation with [Preserve Products](#).³⁰

✓ I will buy organic dairy products.

- When you choose organic dairy products, you support an entire organic ecosystem: the organic farmers who build rich, regenerative organic soil... which produces healthy organic pasture and nutritious organic feed... which nurtures healthy organic cows whose organic milk contains no hormones or antibiotics. Every step of the way, organic farming and husbandry methods [protect the environment](#)³¹ and improve the quality of life for people and animals alike.
- The popularity of organic milk (together with [health concerns](#)³² about use of antibiotics and hormones) has already convinced many conventional dairy farmers to reject the use of artificial growth hormones in their dairy cows. As of 2005, an estimated [200 million acres of US farmland](#)³³ has been devoted to growing feed for livestock; imagine the effect your choice of organic dairy products could have toward rehabilitating some of this land to sustainable organic practices.
- Antibiotics belong to a class of drugs called "antimicrobials" because they kill bacteria and thereby prevent infections. These drugs are used a great deal in the high-density confined feedlot operations common to conventional livestock agriculture. The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) estimates that the use of antibiotics in livestock agriculture accounts for [84% of total antimicrobial use](#)³⁴ in America, far outweighing the amount of antibiotics used on humans. As much as 80-90% of all the antibiotics given to humans and animals are not fully digested or broken down in the body; via waste, these drugs eventually enter the environment, where they may encounter new bacteria and create more resistant disease strains that are even more dangerous than the originals. The rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria is a major public health crisis; infections from resistant bacteria are becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to treat.
- Studies have shown that organic milk offers [increased nutritional benefits](#),³⁵ including higher levels of conjugated linoleic acid and omega-3 fatty acids (also known as the "good fats"), as well as vitamin E, beta carotene, and other antioxidants.

RELATED LINKS

²⁶New York State Department of Environmental Conservation www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/waterbottles.pdf

²⁷Earth Policy Institute www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2007/Update68.htm

²⁸NRDC.org www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/qbw.asp

²⁹Los Angeles Times article articles.latimes.com/2008/sep/17/science/sci-bpa17

³⁰Preserve Products/Brita Filter Recycling www.preserveproducts.com/recycling/britafilters.html

³¹Environmental Defense Fund www.edf.org/article.cfm?contentID=4527

³²CommonDreams.org www.commondreams.org/news2008/0814-05.htm

³³Dr. Greene's Organic Rx www.drgreene.com/21_2155.html

³⁴Sustainable Table www.sustainabletable.org/issues/antibiotics/

³⁵Health News www.healthnews.com/nutrition-diet/organic-milk-a-better-alternative-1137.html



✓ I will compost my food scraps.

- Compost is the decayed remains of organic matter — food scraps, plant material, manure, etc. — that has decomposed into a natural soil fertilizer. It's also called "black gold" because it's so rich in minerals and nutrients. Compost is a vital tool that organic farmers depend upon to build healthy, fertile soil and nurture their crops.
- According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, food leftovers remain the [single largest component](#)³⁶ of the waste stream by weight in the US. Americans throw away more than 25% of the food we prepare, about 96 billion pounds each year. In 2007, almost 12.5% of the total municipal solid waste generated in American households was food scraps; less than 3% was recovered. The rest was wasted in landfills and incinerators.
- Throwing organic materials away doesn't just destroy valuable nutrients, it actually [contributes to global warming](#).³⁷ Once buried in the landfill, organic materials eventually break down anaerobically (without oxygen), producing methane gas — which, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, is 21 times more effective at trapping radiant heat than carbon dioxide. As a result, landfills have become the third largest source of human-caused greenhouse gases in the US.
- Using compost is one of the best ways to nourish your garden. If you use your own food scraps and other organic matter to make your own compost, it's environmentally responsible and incredibly budget-friendly, too. Just like you can find a way to grow a little garden almost anywhere, you can find a way to [compost almost anywhere](#)³⁸ — even in the city!
- There are lots of online resources to help you start composting, including [Earth911.com](#),³⁹ [How to Set Up a Worm Bin](#),⁴⁰ [Backyard Food Composting](#)⁴¹ (advice from King County, Washington), and [Food Scrap Composting](#)⁴² (from the California Integrated Waste Management Board).

RELATED LINKS

³⁶**US Environmental Protection Agency** www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserves/materials/organics/food/fd-basic.htm

³⁷**EcoCycle** www.ecocycle.org/askeco-cycle/2005/0304.cfm

³⁸**NYC Compost Project** www.nyccompost.org/how/index.html

³⁹**Earth911.com** earth911.com/blog/2007/04/02/benefits-of-using-compost/

⁴⁰**About Organic Gardening** organicgardening.about.com/od/compost/ss/setupawormbin.htm

⁴¹**King County Solid Waste Division** your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/garbage-recycling/backyard-composting.asp

⁴²**California Integrated Waste Management Board** www.ciwmb.ca.gov/foodwaste/Compost/



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