

Earth Day Resolutions that Save You Money

Alisa Fleming, www.GoDairyFree.org ~ I sacrificed the annual list of New Year's resolutions long ago, but this year I am very excited about restarting the tradition. Only this time, January 1 isn't my celebratory day, but rather April 22nd, Earth Day. As I jotted down my goals for a greener earth, I noticed that my Earth Day Resolutions were reading more and more like a "how to save money" list … hmmm, interesting coincidence don't you think? Let's see, simplifying, reusing, recycling … a recipe for a healthier environment and bank account! Here are a few resolutions that we have already incorporated into our lifestyle and some on my to do list to start today:

Thinking beyond basic recycling ~ Of course, if you aren't actively involved in everyday recycling (paper, plastic, etc.) … but there is no need to stop there. When we don't have any shipping boxes that fit our needs, rather than buying new ones at the post office my husband takes boxes from the recycling in our community, and cuts them to suit his needs. Rather than tossing those glass jars into the recycling, I use them for bulk foods (see below), sauces, and other food storage. These are just some small samplings of reusing, but you really can take it much further. One woman has begun making her own laundry detergent, all-natural yet saving her a bundle.

Incorporate some vegan meals into your diet ~ I have read many places that going vegan is the "greenest" change you can make to your lifestyle. I am not sure if this is completely true, but considering the resources involved in the meat and dairy industry, it wouldn't surprise me … and I don't think I need to tell you how expensive cheese is. Of course, if vegan living just isn't an option for you, consider cutting back on those expensive items. For example, use meat as a "garnish" such as in stir-fries.

Eat whole foods ~ Of course, switching over to a vegan diet will have a much smaller impact if you load your cart up with pre-packaged foods. Shop the perimeter of the store, looking for produce, whole grains, nuts, etc., and then do a quick surf on the internet to find some wonderful recipes.

Shop the produce grocery sales ~ If those tomatoes are on sale then there is a good chance they are in season. Produce being grown in season requires less pesticides to produce, and is often grown more locally. When we buy produce out of season, it is usually flown in from other parts of the world where better it is a better growing season or where there is a heavy reliance on pesticides.

Go bulk ~ My favorite cost saving strategy is shopping the bulk foods department. It gives me the same thrill as those bulk candy stores used to. Plus, the prices are lower, I have just cut down significantly on excess packaging and processing, I can control the quantity I purchase, and I am buying whole food! Some great items to consider switching to bulk: flours, sugars, beans (dried), nuts, and dried fruit.

The one mile rule ~ Just in case you haven't noticed (perhaps you have been living under a rock in the middle of the desert?), gas prices are just a little bit high right now. In our household, we are strictly enforcing the one mile rule. If it is within one mile of our house, we walk. This includes the grocery store and any other errands. My husband and I bring along a couple of reusable shopping bags (never try to walk a distance with those horrible plastic bags!), and enjoy a nice trip to the store. It gives us some down time, forced exercise, and we save gas, good for our pocketbook and the environment! We often up the distance to 1.5 or 2 miles, but try to keep it realistic. This may not seem like a big difference, but it adds up quickly.

I know there are many more ideas, so please do email me with your favorites, or comment here on One Frugal Foodie with your favorite Earth Day ideas.