

# A Zero Waste Kitchen

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*The kitchen is the heart of a home and holds great power to impart food, family and environmental values. ~ Julie Fathy*

## 1. Zero Waste Kitchen Strategies

- Run a trash audit to learn where improvements can be made.
- Adopt one zero waste habit at a time, starting with easy habits first.
- Challenge your beliefs and try new ways.
- Don't be defeated when life derails you, just jump back on.
- Give yourself grace.
- Share what you learn with others.

## 2. Zero Waste Shopping

What to bring:

- Cloth shopping bags\*
- Cloth produce/bulk/bread bags\*
- Jars and bottles
- Stainless-steel containers, like Lunchbots
- Other containers you already own
- Bandanas, kitchen towels, napkins\*

\*Use what you have around the house, but if you do buy new bags or food wraps make sure they are 100% natural fibers. Natural fibers can be composted at the end of their life. Synthetic fibers cannot.

Bulk Shopping with Mason Jars:

1. Collect your jars. Thrift stores are a great place to find mason jars. Ask family and friends if they have any they'd donate to your cause.
2. Determine the jar tare weight. A tare weight is the jar weight in pounds. When checking out at the store, the cashier will subtract the tare weight from the total weight of the filled jar – thus, you'll only be paying for the food. Below are some mason jars with tare weights, although I'd recommend confirming your own tare weights.

Size of jar	Type of jar	Tare weight
¼ pint / 4 oz	jelly jar	.33 lb.
½ pint / 8 oz	regular mouth jar	.43 lb.
½ pint / 8 oz	wide mouth jar	.46 lb.
1 pint / 16 oz	wide mouth jar	.67 lb.
1 ½ pint / 24 oz	wide mouth jar	.86 lb.
1 quart / 32 oz	wide mouth jar	1 lb.
½ gallon / 64 oz	wide mouth jar	1.71 lb.

3. Make jar labels from cardstock or thin cardboard. Trace the jar lid onto the cardstock and cut it out.
4. Write the ingredient name, tare weight and PLU onto the label. You can add the tare weight and PLU at the store if you don't know it. Place the lid on the jar, the label on the lid and screw on the ring.
5. Place jars in a basket to carry to the store. Be sure your store is equipped to subtract tare weights at check out.
6. Fill your jars and check out.
7. Reuse the labels when you need to refill a jar. Be sure to match the correct jar with the tare weight indicated on the label and fill with the product that matches the PLU.

Where to shop and source food:

- The perimeter of the grocery store
- The bulk section
- Cooperative and health food grocery stores
- Farmers markets
- Direct from the farmer/producer (veggies, milk, eggs, meat, honey)
- Your refrigerator, freezer and pantry
- Grow your own

When zero waste isn't an option:

- Pick better packaging: paper, aluminum, steel, glass
- When weighing in on packaging, perhaps put locally and sustainably grown food as a priority
- Recycle responsibly: learn what your city accepts and make sure you clean food containers before putting them in the bin
- Request companies change to better or no packaging
- Simply say no to some food items
  - Convenience foods
  - Bottled water and other beverages
  - Foods packaged in plastic, especially single use
  - Eat lower on the food chain

### 3. Zero Waste Foods

Cook from scratch to avoid unnecessary waste.

- Meals made from whole foods
- Yogurt
- Condiments: mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard
- Cereal: granola, muesli, oatmeal
- Snacks: popcorn, trail mix, crackers, cookies, bars
- Nut and seed milks
- Fermented foods
- Home-canned foods
- Cooked beans from dried
- Broth

Coffee and tea without the waste

- Fill your own container with coffee and tea leaves from the bulk section
- Alternatively, choose tea in metal canisters or compostable tea bags
- Use a stove-top espresso maker, French press or a reusable filter for a coffee maker or pour over coffee
- For tea, use a kettle, teapot, tea ball and/or tea strainer

### 4. Zero Waste Food On-The-Go

Pack a zero-waste to-go kit:

- Reusable water bottle
- Reusable coffee cup
- Stainless steel bento box
- Cloth bags, beeswax wrap
- Silverware
- Reusable straw
- Napkin

## 5. Ideas to Reduce Food Waste

- Having a deeper appreciation for your food is the first step towards reducing waste. Show gratitude to the animals, plants and people that play a part in nourishing your body.
- Learn how your food was grown, raised or produced and get to know the people involved. Understanding the story of your food is vital. Questions to ask: who grew it; where and how was it grown/raised; who harvested it; how far has it traveled; what resources were needed to grow it and bring it to your table; how does it nourish your body? Understanding the story of your food is an extension of showing appreciation.
- Cook from scratch and learn how if you don't have the skill. You're less likely to waste food that you've invested time to prepare.
- Simplify your meals through repetitive cooking. Have a repertoire of seven or eight meals that your family loves and serve them on repeat.
- Keep a well-stocked pantry with foods your family routinely consumes. Having staples on hand, like grains, dried legumes, nuts, dried fruit, spices, oils, canned tomatoes, etc. can help turn perishable foods into a meal.
- Make a meal plan and grocery list and stick to them.
- Learn how to cook without a recipe. It's helpful to get familiar with different cuisines. Having a basic understanding of the flavors and ingredients that are used in different cuisines allows creativity and gives you the flexibility to pull together different ingredients successfully.
- Shop less by stretching out the time between shopping trips. Clean out the fridge, freezer and pantry before filling it again. No one is going to reach for a bruised apple when there's a shiny new one sitting right next to it.
- Shop more often, but only buy what you need for the few days you're shopping for.
- Do some meal prep when you return from the store, market or farm, like washing and cutting up veggies so they are ready to use.
- Learn how to properly store fruits and vegetables to prevent spoilage.
- Eat perishable foods in order of longevity. Eat the head of lettuce before the kale, peaches before the apples, milk before the yogurt, etc.
- Have some go-to dishes that are good at utilizing leftovers or foods that are soon to spoil. Some of our family favorites are fried rice, soups and frittatas, which are great for using up leftover grains, veggies, meats and cheeses. Homemade pudding and yogurt are good to use up milk that's soon to sour. Smoothies are perfect for using up overripe fruit. The possibilities are endless.
- Freeze foods for later consumption. I freeze everything from chunks of cheese, to leftover soups and casseroles, to juice squeezed from citrus. I also make a point to "shop" from the freezer, so that foods are rotated out on a regular basis.
- Ferment foods to increase their shelf-life.
- Don't toss those food odds and ends that are often considered trash. Beet and other veggie greens that are often tossed can be sautéed, carrot tops and herb

stems can be made into pesto, broccoli stems stripped of the tough outer layer can be grated for slaw or cooked along with the florets, meat bones and veggie waste, such as onion skins and carrot peels can be made into broth, parmesan rinds can impart flavor into soup and stale bread makes delicious croutons or breadcrumbs. There are many vegetables that can be regrown from their scraps. Green onions, celery, basil and bok choy are a few you can start from scraps.

- Compost your kitchen waste!
- Get inspired. Cookbooks and food memoirs can be a source of inspiration. One of my favorite books is *An Everlasting Meal: Cooking with Economy and Grace* by Tamar Adler.

## 6. Equipping your Zero-waste Kitchen

- Keep a minimalist kitchen
  - Have only the necessary kitchen tools.
  - Don't buy or keep duplicates of kitchen tools.
- Buy second hand
- Buy the best quality tools that will last for life
- Buy from companies who stand behind their products and will fix them
- Keep a paperless kitchen:
  - Cloth napkins
  - Kitchen towels and rags in lieu of paper towels
- Move towards plastic-free food storage:
  - Jars
  - Glass containers
  - Stainless steel containers (bento boxes)
  - Beeswax wraps
  - Reusable bowl covers
  - Plates and bowls
  - Casserole dishes
  - Cloth wraps
- Wear an apron to protect your clothes and keep them out of the landfill.
- Things to avoid:
  - Plastic kitchenware
  - Teflon
  - Plastic wrap and bags
  - Unnecessary gadgets

## 7. Cleaning Your Zero Waste Kitchen

- Bar soap and/or refillable/homemade liquid dish soap
- Bulk dishwashing detergent or powdered detergent packaged in cardboard
- Use cleaning tools made from natural materials
  - Brushes with wood handles and natural bristles
  - Natural fiber rags and scrubbies
  - Cellulose pop-up sponges or Swedish dishcloths
  - Stainless steel or copper scrubbies
- Homemade cleaners (all-purpose, glass, scouring)
- Homemade wood butter for maintaining cutting boards and wood utensils
- Avoid buying plastic trash bags to line your trash can. Instead use:
  - Plastic or paper bags that you already have in your home
  - Newspaper
  - No liner

## 8. Zero Waste Celebrations

- Decorate with what you have: food, plants, objects found in nature, things you already own, borrow or purchase second hand.
- Borrow or thrift dishes and flatware.
- Use beeswax candles, rather than soy or petroleum-based candles.
  - Beeswax is renewable and all-natural (soy has added paraffin and/or hardeners).
  - Beeswax is clean and long burning.
  - Beeswax gives a warm light and a honey/floral scent without added fragrance.
- Use cloth napkins and if you don't have enough, borrow, buy second hand, or cut-up an old sheet or tablecloth.
- Serve beverages, such as beer, hard cider or kombucha, that you can buy and fill locally using your own bottles or growlers.
- Fill your own containers at the olive and salad bar at your local grocery store.
- Serve popcorn and other zero waste snacks.
- Skip the plastic water bottles and serve tap water. For a special touch add lemon or cucumber slices, fresh mint or other herbs or fruit.

*A zero-waste kitchen is not just about decreasing the trash you send to the curbside, it's about bringing family and friends to the table to celebrate a healthier, more vibrant life.*