

Sustainable Eating

Benefits for the Environment and Your Health

What is Sustainable Eating?

Sustainable eating means to consume foods that are good for human health and are produced using agricultural methods that do not harm the environment.



5 Steps to Sustainable Eating

Step 1: Eat More Plant Based Protein

Globally, livestock used for meat and dairy production accounts for 18% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions; and producing 1kg of animal protein requires 100x more water than producing 1kg of plant-based protein. Legumes are both economical and offer a variety of health benefits because they are high in fiber and essential nutrients, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Try designating at least one day a week to eat meat free meals. Instead try incorporating beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, hummus, quinoa, nuts, and seeds into a variety of meals. Or, replace half of your meat portion with plant-based protein.

Step 2: Cook Meals at Home

Due to fast paced lifestyles and the emergence of new food technologies there is increasing demand for packaged and processed foods from grocery stores and restaurants. Preparing your own meals from whole foods at home is not only affordable, but allows us to choose the location where our food is purchased, have control over the methods and ingredients used to prepare our food, and control how much food is wasted. When cooking at home, cook in bulk so you have meals conveniently prepared to take for lunch the next day. Use the internet to search for healthy, sustainable, and creative recipes. And next time you plan to go to a restaurant with friends, plan a potluck instead with homemade dishes and exchange recipes.

4 N's to help you pick sustainable foods

Natural: Pick foods with less processing and fewer ingredients/chemicals

Naked: Pick foods with less packaging

Nutritious: Pick fresh whole foods that are rich with vitamins and minerals

Now: Buy produce that is in season



Step 3: Eat Locally

Did you know that on average our food travels 1500 miles before it reaches our plate? By eating local foods we can help reduce the use of fuel and carbon dioxide emissions that occur during the transportation of food. Minimal storage time from farm to plate will also ensure that your food is fresh, tasty, and full of nutrients. To purchase local foods, become familiar with the location of farmers' markets in your neighborhood and refer to a seasonal table to see which produce is in season (seasonal produce is often cheaper!). Read the produce labels in the grocery store to see where your produce was grown and select products grown close to your region. Or try growing some of your own vegetables in pots or your garden during the summer months.

Step 4: Reduce Food Waste

In Canada, 50% of the total food waste each year is from consumer homes. When food is wasted, the energy and resources used in production, processing, packaging, transport, storage, and disposal of the food are wasted as well. Here are some tips to help you reduce food waste at home. Shop wisely by planning meals and using shopping lists so you know exactly how much of each food you need and to prevent impulse purchases. Be aware of the expiry dates of your food and put newly purchased food in the back of the fridge and leave older foods at the front. Use your freezer so food stays fresh for longer. Store leftovers in reusable containers for a convenient lunch or dinner the next day. Try composting your food scraps to recycle their nutrients. And donate non-perishable foods that you do not plan on eating to your local food bank.



Step 5: Choose Whole Foods With Minimal Packaging

Processed and packaged foods such as frozen dinners, ramen noodles, soda, pre-packaged snacks, energy drinks, etc require large inputs of energy and natural resources for their production and packaging. For example, it requires 2.5L of water to produce 1L of coke. Whole natural foods however, require fewer ingredients in their production and fewer resources for processing, use less packaging, taste fresh, and are lower in fat salt, and sugar. Try preparing lunches for work at home in reusable containers using fresh ingredients to prevent impulse purchases at the vending machine. This is not only healthy and sustainable, but also cost effective. When grocery shopping, purchase the majority of your foods from the perimeter isle of the store where the fresh foods are found, and don't forget your reusable grocery bags. Carry a reusable coffee mug and water bottle. Refilling your water bottle is free, while purchasing bottled beverages can cost \$1 to \$3.

For more information on sustainable eating visit the **Sustainable Table** website at: www.sustainabletable.org

For a seasonal produce table, visit Foodland Ontario at: <http://www.ontario.ca/foodland/availability-guide>

Sweet Potato Burritos

Serves 4

- 4-6 soft taco shells, tortillas or wraps
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 4 cups fresh spinach
- 1 cup brown rice or quinoa, cooked
- 1 cup black beans
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ cup red onion, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- hot sauce, to taste



Boil cubed sweet potato in a medium pot of water until tender. Sprinkle with cinnamon and stir to combine.

Steam spinach until slightly wilted. Add spinach to cubed sweet potato.

Add finely chopped onion and minced garlic to black beans, and sprinkle with cumin, stirring to evenly coat beans.

Add cooked rice or quinoa and black bean mix to spinach and sweet potato in a large bowl, stirring to evenly combine, and scoop mixture into the center of the wrap. Drizzle with hot sauce to taste.

Recipe adapted from: <http://www.meatlessmonday.com/recipes/sweet-potato-burritos-4/>