

Think Spring – Green Spring

Green is flowing like the seas, think fish. Flowing like the grasses growing. Like the lawn all over, think cutting and digging, all good thoughts of spring.

How to shop sustainably. Small changes add up-and can start on your next trip to the grocery store. Adopt a new habit, make a few small, earth-friendly tweaks to your daily routine, look no further than the ideas ahead – And tips for a sustainable economy.

Eat green. Load up your cart with ingredients that have lower carbon footprints, like these fridge and pantry staples:

Beans or lentils – Pulses, a food category that includes beans and lentils, create about 7% of the greenhouse gases as an equivalent serving of beef. They improve soil fertility, reduce dependence on fertilizers, require less water to produce than meat, and provide plenty of protein, fiber, and B vitamins. Mushrooms- Fungi like portobello and shiitake mushrooms can grow on waste from other crops, and provide B and D vitamins and protein.

Ancient Grains – Grain biodiversity increases soil nutrients while reducing pest problems. Try spelt or buckwheat as an alternative to white rice, corn, or wheat.

Seafood – Seek out smaller fish like mussels. Opt for local options when you can, which also helps lower that footprint. Seafood like clams, hake, pollock and more at your local grocery store.

Shop Local. Locally grown food can actually look and taste better because it travels fewer food miles to get into the stores. In addition, because it is harvested 1 to 3 days before it hits the shelves, it is usually more nutritious than similar items that are shipped from distances.

Bring your own bag. Paper or plastic? Both are rough on the environment. Paper bags generate more greenhouse gases and use more water to manufacture than plastic. Plastic bags endanger wildlife and are harder to recycle. The best choice? Carry your own – everything from reusable mesh bags for produce to the big ones you will tote everything home in. Now actually remember to bring them each shopping trip, add a reminder to the top of your grocery list.

Hone in at home. Make an impact at home. Try reusable containers or recycled tin foil for storage. Also, rethink your paper towels. 13 billion pounds of paper towels are used in the United States each year. Opt for dishtowels or recycled bamboo paper; both are available in most grocery stores.

Consider your mode of transportation. According to the EPA, transportation was the biggest contributor to the greenhouse gas emissions in the 2017- and more than half of those emissions came from passenger cars, pickup trucks, and minivans. The takeaway? When possible, walk, bike, or take the bus if that is an option. Another approach: Share a ride with a friend (that catch-up time is just a bonus!). If you do drive solo, keep in mind that gas mileage usually decreases rapidly at speeds above 50 mph.

Look at your labels. New labels are coming soon, January 2021! Some labels that indicate the food has been produced with the environment in mind and is certified by an independent organization include USDA Organic, Best Agricultural Practices, Fair Trade, and Rainforest Alliance Certified. If you find products with these names on them, you can be assured they are a good choice for you as a consumer and the environment you live in.

While our environment is changed dramatically in these times of a pandemic, take time to enjoy yourself at home with a sweet treat using ingredients from the local grocery store.

Carrot Cake topped with confectionery Sugar:
Can be made up to two days ahead of serving.

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour

1 ½ tsp. Ground cinnamon
1 tsp. Baking powder
½ tsp. Baking soda
½ tsp. Salt
¼ tsp. Ground cloves
1 cup pecans, roasted and chopped fine
¾-cup vegetables oil
¾ cup packed brown sugar
3 large eggs
3 carrots, peeled and shredded

1. Place a rack in the lower middle of oven and heat to 350. Grease and flour a 9" round cake pan then use pan to trace a 9" circle on parchment. Cut the circle out of parchment, then place in bottom of pan and grease.
2. Whisk flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cloves in a medium bowl. Set one quarter of pecans aside, and then add remaining pecans to flour mixture and toss to combine.
3. In a large bowl, whisk oil, sugar, and eggs until smooth. Using a rubber spatula, fold in carrots and dry ingredients until no dry flour remains. Transfer to prepared pan and smooth into an even layer.
4. Bake until center of cake bounces back when lightly pressed, 50 to 55 minutes. Let cool in pan for 30 minutes, then carefully invert and transfer cake to wire rack; let cool completely.
5. Sprinkle top of cake with confectionery sugar and serve.

Enjoy! Stay safe during these times. Enjoy spring and support our local stores. Happy spring!

We celebrate the life of Eileen Luker, Registered Dietitian for Oneida County Office for the Aging who had served the many Oneida County seniors with many Nutrition articles she wrote for the Senior Nutrition Program this being one of them. She assisted many seniors with nutrition counseling and education through her many years with our program. She was a great mentor as well and will be missed. Our deepest sympathy goes out to her family who she cherished.