

Easy Tips to Celebrate Earth Day at Home

April is the month we celebrate Earth Day! It's a reason to take a look at how you're doing in the kitchen when it comes to being more mindful about what we're eating, how we're getting it to the table and what happens after the meal is over. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- **Plant a garden.** Gardening is fun activity for the whole family. Even toddlers can help with planting and watering the plants. Container gardens are a great way to accommodate small spaces. Tomatoes, lemons and herbs are just a few of the things that are easy to grow in a pot. A fun idea is to plant a theme garden. A spaghetti sauce garden can include tomatoes, bell peppers, onions and herbs. A salsa garden might include tomatoes, jalapenos, onions and cilantro.
- **Start a produce co-op to share with gardener friends.** Last year, I started a produce co-op in my neighborhood. We have an online group to post when we have produce to share. Sometimes we might have more tomatoes, cucumbers or squash than we can use or process before it spoils, so sharing the bounty is a handy option.
- **Start a compost pile.** Fruit and vegetable peels can add up and instead of throwing them in the trash, a compost pile is a natural way to let the waste work for good. Once the compost is ready, it is full of nutrients and can be added to your garden. Compost containers come in all shapes and sizes at garden centers, online or you can build your own to work in different spaces.
- **Go meatless one day a week.** Adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet is not only good for your body with all the extra vitamins and minerals, but it's also good for the planet. Growing and producing fruits and vegetables creates fewer greenhouse emissions than the production of other food items.
- **Choose seasonal, local produce.** Seasonal produce is often less expensive because it is more plentiful and easier for farmers to grow. Produce grown in greenhouses or far away is just more expensive to grow! You'll also be helping reduce the amount of fuel it takes to transport the food.
- **Preserve seasonal produce to enjoy year-round.** Take advantage of fresh produce sales or the bounty from your garden by freezing or canning produce. You'll not only save money but you can feel good knowing your choices today can be enjoyed all year long.
- It's simple to be a bit more mindful about the way we enjoy the foods we eat. Choose one new idea and before long it might just become a habit!



Brenda Thompson
Meal Planning Expert

Brenda Thompson is a busy mom and wife, foodie, self-taught meal planner and freelance writer currently residing in Houston, Texas. Her motivation to become more organized in the kitchen was realized after the birth of her first child. Now, mom to one preteen and one teenager, life seems to move non-stop but that doesn't mean she has to sacrifice healthy meals for her family.

Through her blog, Meal Planning Magic, she shares tips to make mealtimes healthier but also how to save time and money as well as eat well without sacrificing her pocketbook. She also loves to spend time in the kitchen with her family. That not only means spending quality time together, but it's also a great way for her children to learn about new foods and learn new skills. Brenda believes there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to meal planning and offers up-to-date ideas to others to help make meal-prep more enjoyable.



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