

Earth Saving Kitchen Tips

By: Kelly Hamilton, BS; Edited by: Erika Ford, RD LD

This month, we celebrate Earth Day, reminding us to be more sustainable and “green” in our daily activities. Maybe you’ll want to plant a tree, help with picking up trash in a local park, or take a bag of recycling to a nearby center. But why not consider starting in your kitchen? There are many ways to use natural resources in a more earth-friendly way at home. By incorporating these tips, you can save on water and heat usage as well as costs.



- **Use a lid:** Unless the recipe states otherwise, using a lid on your stovetop pots while cooking can help contain the heat, cook food faster, and save on gas or electric costs. Covering dishes in the oven will do the same, as well as seal in moisture. This is great for baked pasta dishes especially, which are prone to drying out.
- **Less is more:** Boiling vegetables in large amounts of water causes leaching of its vitamins and minerals into the cooking water, as well as a duller taste and color. Simmering requires a small amount of water, less heat, and is actually preferable from a nutritional and culinary standpoint. If cooking rice or pasta, which requires more water, consider boiling in a large pot and placing vegetables on top to steam. If boiling meat, use just enough water to cover.
- **Spend wisely:** Using quality cooking equipment will cook food more evenly and decrease wastage, as well as last longer than the lightweight, cheaper ware. Consider using a cast iron skillet if you want something really long-lasting. It will increase the iron content of your food as well!
- **Maximize oven space:** Putting multiple items in an oven at once will save on electric or gas costs as well as time. Cook items that require the same temperature together and set multiple timers to know when to remove each dish. After cooking, use that residual heat to keep food warm prior to eating, covering to seal in moisture.
- **Practice efficient dishwashing:** If using a dishwasher, minimize the amount of running water used beforehand. Try filling your sink half-full of water and placing dishes in there to soften grime and scrub before setting them in the dishwasher. If using a sink, avoid washing dishes one-by-one. You will save time and water if you pre-scrape dishes, fill the wash sink with water and soap, and use the other sink to rinse with hot water. Wash the “cleaner” dishes first to minimize water changes.

These are just a few ways that you can save yourself some money and time and practice efficient use of resources. Find even more tips by searching “Sustainable Eating” at www.eatright.org or visit a registered dietitian in your area.



Kelly is a dietetic intern in the ISPP program at California State University of San Bernardino and is currently completing her rotations in North Central WV. As the nation's food and nutrition experts, registered dietitians are committed to improving the health of their communities. To find a registered dietitian in your area, visit www.eatright.org and click on “Find a Registered Dietitian.”