



Eating Ecology

Small Changes Make a Difference

by Judith Fertig

Consuming food has such an enormous ripple effect that making small changes, one meal at a time, can reap big benefits. How we choose, prepare, cook, serve and preserve our food can improve nutrition, weight loss, cost savings and the environment.

Choosing what we eat is critical. *New York Times* food columnist Mark Bittman believes that no food is absolutely off limits because, "It's all in the way we use these things." Yet, he adds, "The evidence is clear. Plants promote health."

For the past few years, Bittman has experimented with eating vegan for breakfast and lunch, and then indulging at dinner. "It's just one model of a new way of eating," he says, "but it makes sense on many levels. By eating more plants, fewer animals and less processed food, I've lost 30 pounds and my cholesterol and blood sugar levels are normal again."

When a friend sent him a 21st-century United Nations study on how intensive livestock production causes more greenhouse gas emissions than driving a car, Bittman realized how a change of diet is a win-win for him and

"Double recipes to maximize your time and the fuel used to cook, bake or grill. Then, think like a restaurant chef and use what you have in creative ways."

~ Kim O'Donnel, author,
The Meat Lover's Meatless Celebrations: Year-Round Vegetarian Feasts

the environment.

For a wake-up call on how our food choices affect the planet, the Center for Science in the Public Interest offers a short quiz at Tinyurl.com/EatingGreenCalculator.

"One of the most ecologically conscious things you can do to make a great meal is prepare it with food that you grew yourself," says New York-based lifestyle writer Jen Laskey, who blogs at Frugaltopia.com. "Plant a small vegetable garden and a few fruit trees in your yard or join a local community garden. Even sprouting an herb garden on a windowsill will make a difference; plus, everyone in your household will appreciate the choice in fresh seasonings."

Kansas City Star journalist Cindy Hoedel suggests planting parsley, basil, dill and other herbs every three to six weeks in eggshells in a sunny window after the outdoor growing season for a year-round tasty harvest.

When shopping, renowned activist, author and eco-stylist Danny Seo, of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, suggests bringing along reusable shopping bags and choosing local foods when possible, plus sustainable seafood and fair trade, organic and hormone-free food. The Socially Responsible Agriculture Project offers more eco-shopping tips, such as carpooling grocery trips and avoiding products with more than five ingredients, at Tinyurl.com/ShopHealthier

"On average, each person throws about \$600 worth of food into the