

5 Simple Ways to Go Green When Eating Out

Eating in restaurants and take-out meals are regular routines for many families. With just a few changes, you can make eating out nearly as green as eating at home. These five easy eco-habits can help make your community a greener place.

1. Walk, bike, carpool, or take the bus.

Changing your mode of transportation to and from restaurants can be a major way to reduce pollution - and to save on fuel costs at the same time! By using foot or pedal power, you can also burn some of the extra calories that often creep into restaurant meals. If you are meeting friends or family, organize a carpool or take the bus together.

2. Support local farmers and ranchers.

Local foods are fresher and better for the environment (fewer food miles for shipping and storage). Buying foods locally also promotes economic development by keeping dollars within local communities. Check out Montana farm-to-restaurant successes at www.westernsustainabilityexchange.org/whatwedo/farm_restaurant.shtml.

3. Order just what you can eat.

Experts estimate that Americans waste as much as 25 percent of the food produced in the US. Super-sized restaurant meals are a major contributor to food waste in landfills and to expanding waistlines. To reduce waste (and your bill!), order an appetizer as an entrée, share items, and choose a child (or senior) meal whenever you can.

4. BYO (bring your own) reusable containers.

Imagine how many Styrofoam, plastic, and cardboard containers are thrown away after just one use for food or drinks. Switching to a reusable cup for coffee or water can make a serious dent in throwaways. Bringing your own **clean** container for leftovers can also help. Ask local restaurants to use more recyclable or compostable containers.

5. Get a doggie bag (or a compost bag).

Got scraps left on your plate? After you've fed any appropriate meat and bones to your dog or cat, consider feeding plant-based food scraps to your compost pile. Ask for the usual doggie bag (or discreetly bring a **clean** reusable bag from home). Remember that brown bag scraps (from school or work) can also be brought home for composting.