

'Twas the Night Before Christmas...

TIPS FOR A GREAT, GREEN HOLIDAY DINNER



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For many of us, Christmas and New Year's Eve are the most anticipated and important holiday events of the year. Friends and loved ones gather under one roof to celebrate the season with food, presents and parties. While we'd all like to do our part to help the environment, sometimes it seems well nigh impossible during this time of seasonal excess.

This year, the Recycling Council of B.C. is here to help you leave a smaller holiday footprint on the earth by providing a few simple eco-ideas for your Christmas and New Year's Eve dinners. This stuff is easy to do and may even save you money!

Creating the Atmosphere... Without the Waste

There's nothing quite like putting up decorations for the holidays. It's amazing how simple things like ornaments and decorations can bring back childhood memories and light up a room bringing everyone into the spirit of the season. However, it's not unusual to find garbage bags full of ornaments and decorations at the end of the holiday season, sitting at the curb and headed for the landfill. It's also quite common to see a spike in household energy bills with all the lights and electrical gadgets we use to decorate our homes. We can bring the light and warmth of the season into our homes without adding weight to our garbage bins or to our energy bills.



ECO-FRIENDLY DECORATION TIPS

- ✿ Avoid plastics and non-recyclable decorations. Reuse old decorations or use decorations that you can recycle and compost. Find out how to make Christmas crackers: <http://www.botanicalpaperworks.com/blog/read/article/3/eco-friendly-christmas-cracker-favors>
- ✿ Try re-using old greeting cards by making cut outs that can be used as decorations. Not only does it extend the life of old Christmas cards, they are also recyclable at the end of the holiday season, provided that you keep the glue and glitter to a minimum. For more re-use ideas, check out: <http://www.allfreecrafts.com/christmas/index.shtml>.
- ✿ Bring nature inside! Cedar and pine tree branches, acorns and potted plants can bring color and life into a room. They can also be composted at the end of their use, so no branch or leaf has to go to waste.
- ✿ If you are replacing your current light strings, purchase energy-efficient LED light strings. They're also a lot brighter, cooler to touch, and longer-lasting. Call the RCBC Recycling Hotline to find a depot near you that accepts old holiday light strings.
- ✿ If you've got a bunch of electrical decorations around your home, consider plugging them into a timer. These devices are available at most home hardware stores, and can be programmed to turn your electrical decorations on or off within a certain period of time. Remember to unplug your electrical decorations when they're not in use.



Place settings, Cutlery, Napkins and Other Details...

Most people don't give place settings and cutlery much thought when preparing for a party, but a lot of our garbage from the holiday dinner comes from disposable plates, cups, cutlery and napkins. This aspect of the holiday dinner is one where the first of the three Rs - Reduce - is certainly the best way to go.

Use reusable plates, cutlery and napkins. It can be challenging with a larger group of people, but this one step could save you a garbage bag full of waste.

If you are using disposable drinking glasses, make sure they are labeled so people can reuse them throughout the night. Try to use plastic numbered 1, 2 or 5 as these types are accepted by most curbside recycling programs.

If you need to use disposable plates and cutlery, you can purchase the type that can be washed and used for future parties. They are generally lighter and more compact so they can be easily stored for the next party.

Or try the new style of cutlery made from bamboo, cornstarch, potato starch or sugarcane. These are compostable when you've finished with them.

There are some communities in B.C. that offer a food scrap collection program. If you live in one of those municipalities, keep in mind that disposable paper plates and napkins can be composted. Call the RCBC Hotline to find out details for your area.

If you live in the greater Victoria or Lower Mainland area, check out Pacific Mobile Depots. They run monthly drop-off sites that accept household amounts of rigid plastics, including plastic cutlery and plates. To find their locations, accepted materials and fees, visit their website:

www.pacificmobiledepots.com

A Festive and Earth-Friendly Holiday Dinner



One of the best parts of the holiday is gathering with your loved ones to celebrate and share a meal together. A dinner planned with sustainability in mind will not only be easier on the earth, but might also spark some interesting conversation and inspire your friends and family to think of sustainability during their own meals throughout the year.

If you look at the tag on much of the food we buy at the grocery store, you may find names of places that are anywhere from 500 to 5,000 miles away from where we live. According to getlocalbc.com, "The average North American meal travels 2,400 km to get from field to plate." That's like driving the entire Trans Canada Highway in B.C., two and a half times. That's a lot of travelling, generating an incredible amount of

greenhouse gas emissions.

Don't panic! There are a number of ways you can prepare an amazing holiday feast that is both bountiful and environmentally-friendly. Follow the tips below to get started on your eco-friendly holiday meal.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR HOLIDAY DINNER!

- ☼ **Only cook enough for the people you invite.** It's helpful to get advance confirmation on how many guests will be arriving, so that you can prepare your meal portions adequately.
- ☼ **Buy organic food!** Organically grown foods generate less pollution because they are produced with smaller levels of chemicals such as pesticides and preservatives. They are also better for our health. **The Certified Organic Associations of B.C.** have a searchable database on their website where you can find producers, processors and farmers who distribute organic products. Visit <http://www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca/>, and enter your region in the search field to find growers, distributors and retailers who offer organic food in your area.
- ☼ **Locally-sourced food** can play a big role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as supporting our local farmers and helping to protect farmland in B.C. Visit www.getlocalbc.org to find out where to get locally sourced food in your area. The site has a list of retailers, growers and producers of local and organic food in many B.C. communities.
- ☼ Certain **farmers markets** are open through the winter, and are a great way to support local farmers, buy local food and ensure the freshest goods for your holiday feast! Visit www.bcfarmersmarket.org to find a market near you. Use the 'Advanced Search' tool to find markets that are open in the month and area of your choice.
- ☼ **The 100 Mile Diet** is a program that was started in Vancouver, B.C. Visit <http://100mile.foodtv.ca/providers/province/bc> to learn more about eating local in BC.
- ☼ **Try less meat. Really.** Try the following links for vegetarian Christmas menus and recipes:
 - **The Veggie Table**
<http://www.theveggietable.com/recipes/christmas.html>
 - **Green Your—Your guide to green living.**
<http://www.greenyour.com/node/13927>
 - **Celebrating Christmas – Vegetarian Christmas Menu**
<http://www.celebrating-christmas.com/recipes/vegetarian-christmas-menu.shtml>



After the Party...

The morning after the night before! Keep these simple tips in mind if you're hoping to create less waste after the party. Also, drink lots of water before you go to bed and clean-up won't be quite so painful the next day.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- ✿ Pack up the left-overs and refrigerate or give take-home glass containers to guests as they leave. Check out this great link for ideas of what to do with your leftovers: <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/recipes>
- ✿ Be sure to separate your recyclables and your compostable materials from the true garbage. The more material we divert from landfill the longer these facilities will last us.
- ✿ Sort table decorations that are still reusable. Pack them carefully to preserve them until the next party.

Dining Out: Celebrate the Season Stress-Free

Want to skip the cooking and prepping? Everyone needs a break now and then. There are a lot of ways to dine out during the holiday season, while still keeping the environment in mind.

Make a difference:

- ✿ Try vegetarian restaurants. Non-meat products are less resource-intensive during production and generate less ground and water pollution.
- ✿ Eat organic. Organic food is produced with fewer or no preservatives and pesticides, and are less likely to be genetically modified.
- ✿ Some restaurants feature locally-sourced food. Not only are they serving fresh, seasonal food, but they are also supporting local farmers and producers.

Here are some links for finding a dining experience that is eco-conscious:

Open Table

<http://www.opentable.com/home.aspx>

Online restaurant booking database, with listings from across B.C. Has a category for restaurants with organic menus.

Ocean Wise

<http://www.vanaqua.org/oceanwise/>

Focuses on sustainable seafood. Has an online restaurant finder for B.C. and other provinces in Canada.

EarthSave

<http://www.earthsave.ca/>

Has a list of vegan and vegetarian restaurants in B.C. They also host local vegan dine-out events in several areas in BC, as well as recipes for vegan meals.



Who We Are

The Recycling Council of British Columbia is a multi-sectoral, non-profit organization promoting the principles of zero waste through information services, research and the exchange of ideas.

Founded in 1974, RCBC is Canada's longest-serving recycling council and has earned the reputation of being one of the most widely respected environmental organizations in the province today. RCBC has played a major role in the establishment of the many ground-breaking product stewardship programs in the province, which are emulated around the world.

For more information about greening your holidays

including which kind of Christmas tree is best and a host of green gift ideas, contact us!

RCBC Recycling Hotline

Lower Mainland: (604) 732-9253 | Toll-free: 1-800-667-4321

www.rcbc.bc.ca