

Guide to a Zero Waste Thanksgiving!

Start Composting

If there ever was a reason to start vermicomposting now's the season! Food scraps make up 12% of the waste that Americans generate every day. That adds up to about 28 million tons of food that gets thrown out over the course of a year! Food scraps that are sealed in airtight landfills can react with other materials and create methane, a greenhouse gas, and acidic leachate. If the food is composted instead, it creates environmentally friendly, nutrient-rich soil.



Vermicomposting (or vermiculture) is the practice of using worms to turn organic food waste into a nutrient-rich fertilizer called vermicompost. Worms eat the decaying food and transform it into castings (i.e., worm poop) that are full of the nutrients and bacteria that gardens and even houseplants love. Vermicomposting is a great way to compost in an urban setting where outdoor compost bins may not be practical. You can keep the worm bin inside, and, if you do it right, it won't smell or attract flies! If you're curious about making the change check out C3's [guide](#)!

You can also up for a local pick up compost service, like [Healthy Soil Compost](#), [The Urban Canopy](#), [Block Bins](#), and [Collective Resource](#) to name just a few! You can check out the [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#) for more information on composting in Illinois.



If you're interested in composting in other ways, click here to learn how you can [reuse food and yard scraps](#).

Zero Waste means thinking about all aspects of our waste production, keep informed on Chicago's recycling guidelines by checking [Recycle by City](#).

Seek Local

If you're able to, seek out foods that were grown locally for your dinner! The further food travels to get to your plate, the less sustainable it is. Farmers markets are often a great way to obtain locally-grown food! Many markets also match link benefits, check out [Green City Market's](#) program.

Or support local initiatives that work to increase access to sustainable food. Check out:

- <https://www.gettinggrowncollective.com/copy-of-mission-1>
- <https://www.sweetwaterfoundation.com/>



Reduce and Reuse with Plates & Cutlery

When thinking about sustainability at Thanksgiving, an easy thing you can do is serve dinner on reusable plates and cutlery! Disposable plates and cutlery can make clean up easier, but they have a much larger environmental impact. Most disposable cutlery and plates are not recyclable and end up in the landfill. Even if they are recyclable or compostable, it still requires energy and water to create new batches of plastic and paper goods. Compostable dishes and cutlery can usually only be composted in an industrial composting facility and won't break down in the anaerobic (no oxygen) environment of a landfill. It is true that plates and silverware have to be washed, but by making sure you only run full loads in your dishwasher and turn off the heat dry setting, you save water and energy. So, break out those beautiful ceramic plates and silverware for your turkey dinner!



Reuse Your Scraps!

Now's the time to take stock! Making stock from Thanksgiving food scraps is simple, cost effective, and green.

What you'll need:

- 1 turkey carcass (picked clean)
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 onions, peeled and quartered, or 5 to 6 clean onion ends from other dishes
- Optional: unused veggies can accompany this stock. Carrots, celery, garlic and other spices will make this recipe your own!



Step 1: Toss everything into a large stock pot and add water until just covering the turkey scraps.

Step 2: Bring to a boil, then lower to a simmer.

Step 3: Let the stock simmer one hour then strain.

Tip: You can also make it a vegetarian stock by omitting the turkey scraps. Make it whenever unused veggies are on the verge of spoiling, or save vegetable scraps in your freezer to use in future stocks!

Make Your Own Beeswax Wraps!

What's all the buzz about beeswax food wraps? They're an eco-friendly alternative to plastic wrap, and can be used over and over again! They'll soon replace your need for plastic wrap!

What you'll need:

- 100% cotton fabric
- Cosmetic-grade beeswax pellets or finely shredded shavings from a cosmetic-grade bar
- Scissors
- Paintbrush
- Parchment paper
- Baking sheet
- Hanger (optional)
- Binder clips (optional)
- Ruler (optional)



Step 1: Preheat the oven to 200°F. Cut your fabric to the measurements you'd like. For a snack bag, use a 7" by 14" piece of fabric. A 14" by 14" square will cover most sandwiches. You can also measure your favorite food storage items for a custom fit.

Step 2: Line your baking sheet with parchment paper and place the fabric on top of it, if your fabric has a pattern, place the patterned side face down.

Step 3: Sprinkle beeswax pellets evenly across your fabric, make sure to get the edges. Place in the oven for 4 to 8 minutes. Remove as soon as the beeswax has melted across the surface

Step 4: Use the paintbrush to evenly spread the melted beeswax. Using tongs remove the fabric from the baking sheet and using binder clips and a hanger attached the cloth to dry or simply put over the back of a chair with the beeswax side up. Once cooled, it should be just slightly tacky.

Step 5: Store all your leftovers sustainability!

Tip: Wash your wraps by hand using cool water and a mild dish soap. Place them on a drying rack or clothesline to dry. Avoid any heat such as hot water, microwaves, or ovens that will cause the beeswax to melt and ruin your wraps!