



green shopping

What you eat matters! Greening your diet can have a more profound effect on greenhouse gas emissions than switching to a hybrid car.

Research by the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden tracked the lifecycle of food items from the time they were grown until they were eaten or discarded. It shows that locally produced vegetables fare best, and beef is worst.

what to buy

Foods causing the least amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were mainly vegetarian, unprocessed, and could be transported a long way if by sea. Foods causing the greatest amount of GHG emissions include domestic beef, tropical fruit (it is transported by air), and domestic cheese. Mid-range foods include those of mixed vegetable/animal origin, those that are highly processed, and those that require extensive transportation.

So to minimize the impact of your food on the environment, buy mostly foods that are plant-based, fresh or minimally processed, and locally grown. Farmers' markets are ideal to help you teach your family about seasonal produce, and the food typically comes at a cheaper price as well. Organic foods may also be available, which are better for the planet and probably for your health.

Plan your family's needs and, to reduce waste as much as possible, buy fresh produce the day you'll use it. You'll save time and money if you buy non-perishables, such as cereals, grains, and legumes, in bulk. And incorporate several purposes into one trip when you visit your supermarket.

how to carry it home

Keep some eco-friendly bags in your handbag or the trunk of your car: jute or hemp bags or bags made from organic cotton (these fold easily). The advantage is that you can use them over and over. When you do forget to bring your own bag, choose boxes or paper bags over plastic. You can place vegetable scraps in paper bags and throw them directly into a compost bin. Avoid collecting hundreds of plastic bags, but use those you do accumulate to line trash cans.

There are many quite reasonable ways to feed the family without heating the planet. They may require you to make some small adjustments, but they can translate into big results when we all adopt them.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See the latest at <http://www.sueradd.com>.