

### THE FOOD

- Start with food that is [in season](#), [local](#), and organic when possible. Check out your local Farmer's Market. Sometimes local farmers may be growing organically without paying to be certified- ask around.
- When you buy food at the grocery store, check the labels and avoid [palm oil](#).
- Don't forget to bring your own [bags](#) when grocery shopping!

### COOKING

- When it comes to energy consumption, a gas stove requires less energy for stove top cooking. Gas stoves with an electric ignition (piezo) will use 40% less gas than one with a continuous pilot light.
- However, when compared to baking or oven use, an electric stove proves the better option. Convection stoves may be the best choice of all, as they can cook in half the time and with much lower temperatures. Less energy is used BUT these stoves are quite expensive and you may need to replace your cookware (copper, aluminium and glass can't be used).
- When using the oven, try to reduce the number of times you open the door while cooking. Each time the door is opened, the stove loses about 1/4th of its heat.
- So before buying, ask yourself whether you will cook or bake more often.
- If you have a gas stove, it's important to have a good vent/hood.
- Your most environmentally friendly cooking option- the microwave. Microwaves use between one-fifth and one-half as much energy as conventional stoves. If you have a countertop unit (rather than a wall mounted unit), consider unplugging between uses to save on [vampire power](#).

*This table from the Consumer Guide to Home Energy Savings compares the cost of cooking a casserole in several ways. It assumes the cost of gas is \$.60 per therm, and electricity is \$.08 per kWh.*

Appliance	Temperature	Time	Energy	Cost
Electric Oven	350	1 hour	2.0 kWh	\$.16
Electric Convection Oven	325	45 minutes	1.39 kWh	\$.11
Gas Oven	350	1 hour	112 therm	\$.07
Electric Frying Pan	420	1 hour	9 kWh	\$.07
Toaster Oven	425	50 minutes	95 kWh	\$.08
Electric Crockpot	200	7 hours	7 kWh	\$.06
Microwave Oven	"High"	15 minutes	36 kWh	\$.03

### COOLING

- The [refrigerator](#) is the single biggest power consumer in most households.
- Vacuum the coils on the back of your refrigerator twice a year to maximize efficiency.
- Leave some space behind and on the sides of your refrigerator, so air can circulate around the condenser coils. Trapped heat increases energy consumption.
- Be sure the refrigerator isn't located next to heat sources such as heat vents, stove or dishwasher. Even direct sun will lower efficiency - block it if possible

- Check the door gasket occasionally to be sure the seal isn't broken by debris or caked on food. You can test this by closing the door over a dollar bill so that it's half in and half outside of the refrigerator. If you can pull the bill out easily, the latch may need adjusting or the seal may need replacing.
- Check temperature settings. Recommended refrigerator temperatures are 37 - 40 degrees. Recommended freezer temperature is 5 degrees. To check the refrigerator temperature, place an appliance thermometer in a glass of water in the center of the refrigerator and check the reading after 24 hours. To test the freezer temperature, place thermometer between frozen packages and check the reading after 24 hours.
- If your freezer is pretty empty, fill the space with empty milk cartons filled with water. A full freezer is more energy efficient than a mostly empty one.
- Avoid frost build-up in the freezer compartment. Frost build-up should be less than 1/4 inch in thickness. Excess frost build-up reduces the energy efficiency of the unit.

### **KITCHEN TOOLS**

- Do not buy new non-stick cookware, and consider replacing old non-stick cookware. Many of the chemicals used in non-stick cookware don't break down in the environment. They persist for long periods of time, and are absorbed by seals and other wildlife, with unknown consequences. Within five minutes on a conventional stovetop, non-stick cookware can be heated to the point that the coating starts to break apart and emit toxic particles and gases (Environmental Working Group).
- Buy stainless steel or cast iron cookware.
- Buy bamboo utensils instead of plastic utensils.

### **THE ACTUAL COOKING**

- When you are boiling water, put a lid on the pot so it boils faster.
- But don't leave the kitchen and forget about your pot of water, which could mean that it boils for 5-10+ minutes before you add something to the water.
- If you are cooking something like pasta and vegetables, consider steaming the vegetables over the pot of water you are boiling to cook the noodles.
- Use the appropriate burner size for the pot or pan you are using. Don't put a small pot on the large burner.
- When boiling potatoes (or something similar)- cut them into smaller pieces, which helps them to cook faster and reduces cooking time.

### **THE CLEAN UP**

- Use cold water if you need to run the garbage disposal.
- Consider composting your food scraps.
- Dishwashers use less water than washing dishes by hand, but you should only run them when they are full. And skip the pre-rinse!
- Use phosphate free dish soap.
- Skip the dry cycle- crack the dishwasher open when it's done running, and the heat should be enough for the water to evaporate off.

### **WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE COOKING**

- If you eat out, bring your own containers for left overs!