

Sustainability Tips for the Holidays 2024

Hosting or attending an event.

- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated, or fully enclosed indoor spaces. (social) Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is safe and feasible.
- Consider getting vaccine booster if you are eligible to protect yourself and others. If you have a weakened immune system, even if vaccinated, use precautions recommended for unvaccinated people. (social)
- Consider who you are visiting with – if immunocompromised, unvaccinated, or elderly, increase precautions. (social)

Serving Guests: Keep safe around food and drinks

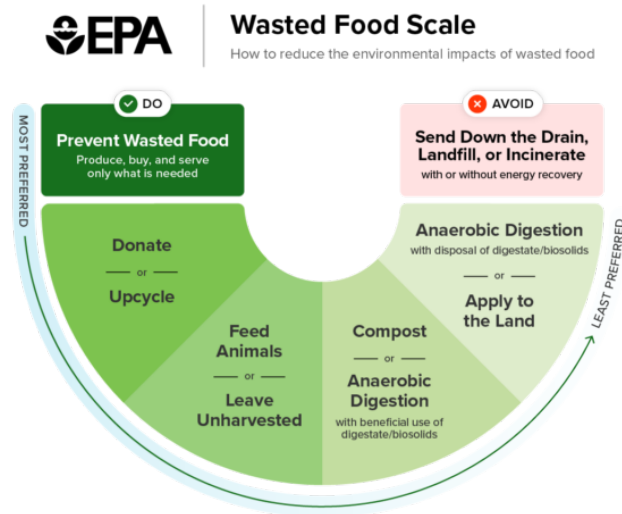
- Make sure everyone washes their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after preparing, serving, and eating food. (social, environmental)
- Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled, such as in the kitchen or around the grill, if possible. (social)
- Avoid any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets or buffet-style potlucks, salad bars, and condiment or drink stations. (social)

Holiday Meals

- Consider a heritage breed turkey from a nearby farm or a free-range turkey. (environmental)
- Buy locally grown organic produce from farmer's market, local chain or co-op. Fresh local fall produce includes squash, pumpkin, apples, broccoli, cranberries, Brussel's sprouts, grapes, mushrooms, onions, garlic, parsnips, pears, peppers, persimmon, quince, radishes, turnips spinach, potatoes, zucchini, leeks, eggplant, cauliflower, artichokes and more. Locally produced jellies, jams and spreads are available. (environmental)
- Serve locally baked breads (bake your own with family and friends!) and cheeses and dairy products. (environmental, social)
- Bake your own Holiday cookies/desserts with family/friends rather than purchasing. (environmental, social)
- Do not waste food by cooking too much. (environmental)
- Choose a natural centerpiece. (environmental)
- Serve local water. Rather than bottled, use filtered tap water. (environmental)
- Eat organic. This means less pollution and is safer for humans and farm workers. (environmental)
- Shop a local farmers market – some are open all year within driving distance of UB. (environmental, economic)



- Compost food scraps. ([environmental](#))
- Run only full dishwasher loads during cleanup. ([environmental](#))
- Consider a meatless meal. ([environment](#))
- Consider combining family events, rather than have separate events. ([social](#))
- Keep a ‘white board’ of what needs to be eaten soon. ([environmental](#))
- Planning – try Save the Food’s [Guestimator](#) ([environmental](#))
- Leftovers – [Store](#) properly; give away; Using them up: making leftovers [taste like new](#); [Freezing](#) leftovers ([environmental](#), [social](#))
- Understand [date labels](#) ([environmental](#), [economic](#))



Gift Giving

- Select local gifts from nearby artisans or from consignment stores. ([environmental](#), [economic](#))
- Combine trips when shopping. Choose a few stores, rather than several. Shop close to home or online. ([environmental](#), [economic](#))
- Do not always buy new — buy something vintage. ([environmental](#), [economic](#))
- Select a gift of quality vs. quantity for a longer lifespan. ([environmental](#), [economic](#))
- Select gifts made of sustainable materials, with minimal or recycled packaging. ([environmental](#))
- Choose a gift that teaches green — gardening book with gardening tools. ([environmental](#), [social](#)).
- Give a gift that stimulates a child’s curiosity — like a zoo or museum family membership and enjoy together. ([environmental](#), [social](#))
- Choose a gift that can be enjoyed collectively, rather than individually. ([social](#))
- Give performance/event tickets that you can enjoy together as a family or group. ([social](#), [environmental](#), [economic](#))
- Make the gift yourself or with family — craft, or canned or baked goods. ([social](#), [environmental](#))



- Give socially conscious gifts — Thin Ice, West Side Bazaar, Buffalo ShopCraft, Global Exchange Fair Trade online store. (economic, social)
- Donate unwanted gifts or re-gift to friends and family if appropriate. (environmental)
- Recycle your old cell phone or tablet if you get a new one for the holidays. (environmental)
- Make the decision as a family that each person buys for only one other family member. (economic)
- Package gifts in material that can be composted (shredded paper, cornstarch peanuts). (environmental)
- Choose battery-free toys or buy and use rechargeable batteries. (environmental)
- Give a bicycle or bus pass subscription instead of a car. (environmental)
- Use yummy, natural treats in stockings. (nuts, fruit and baked goods) (environmental)
- Choose gifts that encourage others to make less waste. (environmental)
- Do not use cheap stocking stuffers. (environmental)
- If shopping online – buy in consolidated order to save on packaging. (environmental)
- Participate in gift giving in moderation – do not panic overbuy for the sake of gift giving. (environmental, economic)

Give to a Charity

- Adopt a community member or family and bring them a meal or a gift. (social)
 - Adopt a new pet if you can do so, to give an animal a much-appreciated loving home. (social)
 - Adopt a charity in need. (economic, social)
 - Donate to food pantries and shelters — the need is greater now as more and more people are facing continued challenging times. (social, economic)

Give a gift card

- The options are endless. Local community establishments need our support at this challenging time.
 - Local Restaurants (economic, social)
 - Local hairdresser/barber (economic, social)
 - Local grocery establishment (friends or family could also use the additional financial assistance) (economic, social)
- Digital gifts -- give loved ones something they can enjoy immediately, gift them with digital subscriptions for e-books, streaming services, online classes, and audiobooks. Stay connected by starting a long-distance book club or watch movies at the same time. The Internet is also rich in remote games you can play for quiz nights! (economic, social)

Holiday Tree Decisions and Decorations

- Get a chemical free tree. Choose a potted tree over a cut tree and then plant it after the holidays. ([environmental](#), [economic](#))
- Choose a cut tree over an artificial tree and have it mulched afterward. Cut your own tree. ([environmental](#), [social](#))
- Recycle your Christmas tree or donate tree to the zoo to feed the animals there. ([environmental](#), [social](#))
- Replace burned-out bulbs rather than throwing out the string of lights. ([environmental](#))
- Use string lights that are RoHS compliant and free from Prop 65 warning labels – less hazardous substances. ([environmental](#), [social](#))
- Use holiday lights in moderation — do not over decorate. ([environmental](#))
- Turn lights off at the end of the night or use a timer. ([environmental](#))
- Look for energy-efficient lights/decorations — use LED lights as they use a fraction of the electricity of conventional lights. ([environmental](#))
- Choose durable and meaningful ornaments that last longer than the plastic or glass ones. Better yet, create your own ornaments with family/friends (on zoom). ([environmental](#), [social](#))
- Create decorations from natural materials like pine boughs and cones with family. ([social](#) [environmental](#)).

Greeting Cards and wrapping

- Use e-cards instead. ([environmental](#))
- Make your own wrapping paper (use newspaper or go without). ([environmental](#))
- Having gift giving be a scavenger hunt instead. ([social](#))
- Use postcards rather than holiday card or use greeting cards made of recycled paper. ([environmental](#))
- Support local artist & designers for your cards. ([social](#), [economic](#))
- Use leftover holiday cards for gift labels. ([environmental](#))
- Send cards more often to those that are social isolated. ([social](#))

Recycling tips

- Recycle cookie tins. ([environmental](#))
- Hard-to-open rigid plastic packaging can be recycled. ([environmental](#))
- Check with your town/city to see if it will recycle gift paper – use newspaper, fabric, or recycled paper instead. ([environmental](#))
- Ribbon should not be put into recycling; do not use or reuse for multiple years. ([environmental](#))
- Tape should be removed if possible — does not recycle well. ([environmental](#))
- Compost scraps where appropriate — use a composter! ([environmental](#))
- Recycle your tree or leave your tree in your backyard until spring as a haven for birds & small animals. ([environmental](#))



- Create suet “ornaments” to hang on tree for birds/animals with family. ([environmental](#), [social](#))

Travel to & from festivities

The choices you make regarding travel affect your total carbon footprint more than anything else. Taking a single plane ride costs the environment more than you can save by installing solar panels and driving an electric vehicle for an entire year. Take a train or bus instead of flying whenever possible. Check the Amtrak site for [deals](#), [discounts](#), and [rewards program](#). If you feel you must drive, drive an electric vehicle (Environment) or carpool! (Environmental, social)

- Wear masks in public transportation, and in inside crowded settings. ([social](#))
- Wash hands often. ([social](#))

International:

- Offset fossil fuel pollution – consider carbon offset initiatives. ([environmental](#))

Miscellaneous:

- Donate your time to a sustainable cause – give back for the holidays and improve the community and the planet.
- Volunteer at a Food Pantry, Shelter, Charity or Hospital to bring joy to those less fortunate. ([social](#))
- Adopt a community member or family and bring them a meal or a gift. ([social](#), [economic](#))
- Spend “Black Friday” outside, doing something you love and care about, rather than spending. ([social](#), [economic](#))
- For the new year, commit to one or two days a week of being vegan. ([environmental](#))