

Family Meal Ideas for a Green Lifestyle

With the busy, hectic lifestyles that most families have today, mealtimes together are the best time to reconnect, interact and relax. It can also be a great opportunity to share your values and re-affirm your family's dedication to support a clean environment.

Even food choices can reflect those ideals and goals. By reducing meat consumption, choosing organic, and patronizing local food sources, families can enjoy their meal and what their choices stand for at the same time: a cleaner, greener planet. Though it may sound simple, we are all consumers and our choices have an impact.

Cut Back on Meat

Everyone loves a good burger on the grill. Meat is fine in moderation, but our demand for animal and meat products has made an impact on the environment, not to mention our overall health and fitness. Consider that in the USA, 70% of homegrown cereals and grains are fed to farmed animals. This industry consumes one-third of all domestic nonrenewable resources, including fuel. Because of this, more environmentally conscious families are decreasing their intake of meat or taking it out of their diet completely. If the thought of giving up that barbecue scares you, the good news is that you don't have to become a vegetarian or vegan to make a difference. By just having a few meatless meals a week, you can decrease your environmental impact and benefit your family's health as well.

Choose Organic

Many concerned parents choose organic products for their family because they are free of pesticides. They might not even realize the environmental benefits of organic agriculture. It is completely sustainable because it is produced in such a way that the land is not harmed, and is preserved for future use. Organic farmers preserve the soil, fertilize naturally without chemicals, and conserve water. Quite often they also sell locally, which conserves fossil fuels and energy otherwise spent for transportation.

Though once only found in health food and specialty stores, organic foods are becoming available everywhere, from grocery stores, to bulk warehouse stores, to farmer's markets. Even if there isn't a wide variety of organic foods available or affordable for you, you can look into participating in a community garden or starting one yourself in your yard.

Eat Local

To support not only a better environment, but also your local economy, purchase and eat foods grown near or in your local community. Think of how much pollution and energy is saved when food doesn't have to be refrigerated, frozen, or transported thousands of miles. Fresh is best, and that's what you'll get locally from food that hasn't traveled far. It is often more economical as well. Imported, out of season foods will cost more. Most importantly for families, eating local is safer, as it is often organically grown and there is

a much lower chance of food contamination during shipping or processing. Parents can feel confident preparing locally grown food with their children that it is wholesome, safe, and eco-friendly.

Hopefully you will be encouraged to try some of these great ideas to get you started incorporating green ideals into family mealtime. Families that eat together can think green together, and enjoy great tasting food at the same time.