

Week 3: Your kitchen

Look around your kitchen to see what plastics you can reuse, what you can replace, and what you should not buy again. Focus on your use of single use plastics; most of us will continue to use existing reusable plastic containers, utensils, etc. until they're worn out. Use these tips to make your kitchen more plastics-free:

1. Buy dish soap and other cleaners in bulk, using your own glass jars. But first find out what becomes of the bulk plastic jugs at the stores. Are they sent back to be re-filled? (One store we are sure of is [Bhumi Refillery](#). The owner can tell you what happens to every jug in the store.)

Or try using bar soap to wash dishes- regular castile soap works for dishes, or try one of these [zero-waste dish soap bars](#).

2. Use natural cleaning supplies: Use rag cloths, or compressed natural cellulose sponges, instead of plastic & synthetic sponges. Use a dish brush with a wooden handle and compostable bristles. Use biodegradable natural rubber latex gloves for food prep & cleaning.

3. Avoid plastic wrap and zip-log bags: While convenient, plastic wrap tends to be single-use and Ziploc bags don't last forever. They end up in the trash, impossible to recycle. Find reusable alternatives, such as silicon bags (which are even freezer safe) and beeswax wrap, or if you're trying to avoid buying new items, the trusted "plate to cover a bowl, and a bowl to cover a plate" method will also keep your food fresh.

Tip: Store greens in wet terry cloth bags; put cut celery sticks in a glass with water.

4. Find alternatives to plastic for the freezer: Canning jars are very good for freezing, as long as you use the wide-mouth variety and do not fill to the very top; leave a good inch at least for the contents to expand. (Regular glass jars are not recommended for freezing because their non-tempered glass can expand and contract with temperature fluctuations and cause breakage and explosions.)

See this article for many other freezer solutions: [How to Freeze Food Without Plastic](#).

5. Stop using plastic trash bags: You might consider the pros and cons of using [compostable trash bags](#); if a bag is certified compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute, that means at least 90% of its plant-based material completely breaks down within 84 days in an industrial compost facility. However, when a compostable bag is tossed in the landfill, it's starved of the oxygen it needs to break down. Instead, it just sits there and can stick around for a similar amount of time as that plastic garbage bag.

You can also look for "landfill-bound bags" made from recycled plastics. Or re-use paper shopping bags. Or look at this article about going trash-bag-free: [Kitchen Trash Bags — Green Alternatives](#). At the end of the day, the most eco-friendly thing you can do is to throw out less stuff.

6. Get cooking: Can't live without hummus, yogurt, bread, and other foods only packed in plastic? Slow down this Lent and prepare these foods at home.

Here's a recipe for [Yogurt Made in an Instant Pot](#), and here's one for [Easy Homemade Hummus](#).

7. Remember Simplicity: Simplicity requires us to cut away everything that is extraneous, so that our outward life fully reflects our inward life. It's easy to get caught up in buying fancy products to replace our plastic habits, but first, look around for alternatives you already have; re-use glass jars and plastic containers you already own. Wash and reuse Ziplock bags. This is a transition to using less, which ideally, won't require buying more. If you are able to transition to more sustainable products as you run out of things, great!

Query: Do we center our lives in the awareness of God so that all things take their rightful place?