

Week 6: Celebrations, Travel, and Eating Out

1. Easter is around the corner, and like all holidays in the US, it generates a lot of plastic trash. Tips: Use a wooden, wire, or rattan basket. Avoid the shredded plastic bedding known as Easter grass. (If you already have it, be sure to package it up and reuse it year after year rather than tossing it.) Get the same effect with colorful paper using your paper shredder.

Rather than buying plastic eggs to fill, consider buying [papier-mache eggs](#). If plastic eggs are already in your home, use them for years to come and donate them when you no longer need them. Remember to flex your conscientious-purchasing muscles while figuring out what to put into the eggs, too. Coins, paper-wrapped candies or goldfish crackers, wooden toys, or clues to larger prizes all fit the bill. Look for bulk sources for chocolate eggs and jelly-beans to reduce plastic packaging.

Or use hard-boiled eggs! And if you make your own egg dyes, you will cut out all the packaging involved with store-bought dye kits, including individually wrapped dye tablets and plastic cups and dippers. Here's an [egg dye recipe using food colors](#) that works great; and here's one with [vegetable egg dyes](#), including onion skins, turmeric, and cabbage, which eliminates the plastic food color bottles!

2. Parties: Use REAL silverware and plates, and glassware that's versatile and strong, like mason jars, to avoid using single-use plastic cups. Or if you're having larger gatherings or have children attending, find compostable [paper or bamboo options](#) for cutlery, plates, and [hot and cold cups](#).

You should check to make sure that you can really compost your compostables, and whether this means tossing them into a home compost bin or taking them to a special composting facility: Sustainable materials like bamboo and paper will easily decompose in the compost, but the bigger problem is the PLA (polylactic acid) that's often paired with them; PLA is a polymer made from renewable resources, used as a reinforcer. If PLA is used more as a liner, then it can typically be composted at home. Cups made primarily of PLA will have to be taken to a composting facility.

3. Zero waste eating out: Pack a zero-waste bag to take when eating out, with a reusable water bottle, coffee cup, and bamboo cutlery. Plastic disposable cutlery and straws are among the worst plastic pollution culprits. Also, put together a bag of reusable containers for leftovers and keep it in the car, to box your food at the end of a meal. If you end up with leftovers, ask what carryout containers the restaurant uses. If possible, it's always better to use you own reusable containers.

4. Ordering carryout can be a problem. Some restaurants are now using fully biodegradable and compostable clamshells or other carryout containers made of molded fiber from plants such as corn, sugarcane, and bamboo. But many of these products are too expensive for restaurants with a high volume of take-out orders. Ask what type of containers the restaurant uses before placing a take-out order. If you don't like the response, consider a different restaurant or ask if they will use containers you provide. If you go ahead and place an order that entails Styrofoam clamshells, register your concerns about plastic when you pick it up and encourage them to switch to eco-friendly containers. Politely decline any plastic utensils, seasonings packaged in plastic, and flimsy tote bags.

5. School lunch: According to National Geographic, *"The average 8- to 12-year-old throws away about 67 pounds of lunch trash every year."* It's gotten so bad that the EPA has a ["Pack A Waste-Free Lunch"](#) program, with activity sheets. Tips: Avoid snack-sized cups of anything! Instead, pack foods in reusable containers or [reusable snack bags](#). Use a thermos, pack bamboo utensils, and a cloth napkin.

6. When traveling, bring your own. Bring your own toiletries and avoid using the free hotel offerings. Skip buying single-use travel sizes; instead buy small re-fillable containers. Put together a travel kit – utensils, cloth napkins, plates, bowls, mugs or stainless-steel travel cups, salt & pepper, etc. Use them at hotels that offer breakfast served on single-use plastic (with plastic utensils). Always carry a reusable water bottle or container for coffee or tea. If you can't fill a water bottle before boarding a plane, ask for water on the plane and hand your bottle to the service attendant with the top off.

7. Remember Discernment. When we regularly practice listening for guidance, we become more sensitive to Divine nudges in our personal choices.

Queries: *Are we careful to meet problems in a spirit of love and humility, with minds open for creative solutions? Are we aware that we speak through our inaction as well as our actions?*