

Tips for Going Green this Holiday Season

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It's that time of year again—special days of spending time with family, watching a little football on TV, and lots of dinners and treats. That's right, the holidays are here! And while celebrations may be scaled down a bit this year, we've got you covered on tips for going green as you prepare your favorite holiday dishes and goodies.

No, "going green" is not a term for the reaction to your aunt's mystery meat casserole! Instead, these are ways to reduce, re-use, and recycle. Let's begin with source reduction. In other words, don't cook so much food. This year make an effort to prepare only enough food to eat and to have leftovers for your guests and you for the next few days. When such an abundant amount of food is prepared, the potential outcome is that these leftovers go bad before they can be eaten and get thrown in the trash resulting in waste.

The next step is re-use. This can be accomplished by avoiding the use of disposable materials such as paper plates, napkins, plastic cups, and disposable utensils. Instead, prepare and serve your meals in reusable containers. Go ahead and bring out cloth napkins, the fine china, fancy flatware, stemware and those serving dishes you have been saving for a special occasion. What better time than the holidays to pull out all the stops? Another way to re-use is to send everyone home with a doggie bag.

The final step is recycling. Even if the above advice is heeded, chances are you will still have items that you cannot eat or reuse. Food scraps accumulated during the preparation of meals and some leftovers can be added to a backyard compost bin. Flowers from the table centerpiece can be placed into the compost pile as long as the flowers are real. Items not suitable for the compost bin such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles, paper, and cardboard can be recycled. Check with your city or county solid waste department on the specific items accepted for recycling.

To make collecting compostable and recyclable items easier make sure your guests know which materials can be composted and recycled and in which bin these items should be placed. Also, make composting and recycling more convenient by placing bins in appropriate areas.

To learn how to recycle in your local area please visit the [Statewide Recycling Directory](#). For more information on composting, recycling and waste

reduction please visit [MDEQ's Waste Division page](#) and the [Mississippi Recycling Coalition's website](#).