

Packaging



You can reduce packaging in different areas of your life by targeting the way you buy your groceries and other consumable items such as cleaning products or detergents.

Avoid packaging at the grocery store

Avoid excess packaging of your food by ditching single-serve portions for snacks and meals and instead buying the big box or bag and re-packing your food into your own reusable containers. You will find this saves you money, too!

One example: instead of buying single-serve baby carrots for lunches, buy a large bag of carrots, slice into sticks and pack in containers. Remember to compost the peels and reuse the produce bag or add it to your plastic film recycling. You can also reduce waste further by buying unbagged carrots, using a reusable produce bag, and leaving the skins on rather than peeling them.

Buy in bulk



Reduce food packaging even more by shopping in the bulk section of the grocery store and using your own produce bags and containers at farmers markets, co-ops or natural food stores (Check out the Minnesota Grown Directory at minnesotagrown.com for a farmers

market listing). Ask your grocery store before using your own containers if they have a bulk bin section as some check-out aisles cannot remove the container weight, or "tare" weight, from your purchase.

If you find that your store cannot weigh outside bags or containers, you can always use a lightweight reusable bag instead of plastic produce bags, and use any reusable bag or container when items are sold by count instead of by weight. Check the price signs to find out how you'll pay. Examples by count: "\$0.79 each," or "2 for \$4"

Make your own

See recipes starting on page 60 to learn how to make the following waste-reducing products:

- Pizza dough (eliminate frozen pizza boxes or cardboard takeout boxes)
- Yogurt (reduce plastic packaging)
- Mustard (reduce or eliminate plastic squeeze bottles)
- Stovetop popcorn (eliminate potentially harmful and non-recyclable microwave popcorn bags)
- Infused water and herbal teas (reduce or eliminate plastic bottles or tea bags and paper or plastic packaging)
- Kitchen cleaners (reduce or eliminate hazardous chemicals and plastic packaging)

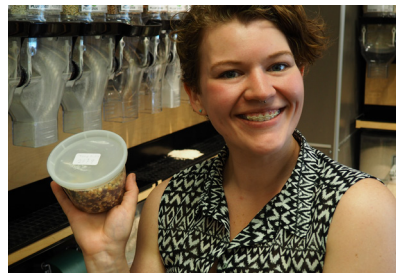
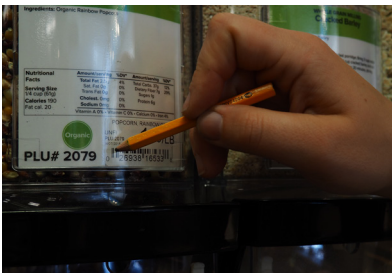
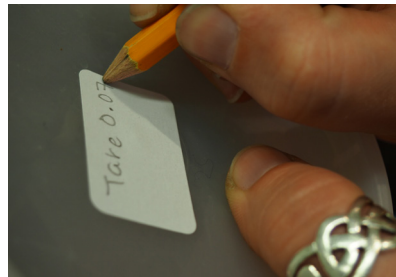
“Bulk packaged” vs. “bulk loose”

Large wholesale club stores like Costco and Sam’s Club offer foods in bulk quantities, but this doesn’t always mean you are preventing waste. Many items are still individually packaged within a larger box or bag. Ask yourself if the packaging is reducing waste, and remember to only buy an amount of food your family can consume before it spoils. It can be tempting to buy a large amount of produce at a good price, but if it goes bad, you negate the benefits both to you and to the environment. Regular grocery stores and co-ops have “loose” bulk goods, where you usually scoop or pour the product directly into your own container or a provided bag. These options can be very helpful when trying to reduce waste because you can avoid much of the packaging.

How to buy in bulk

You may be intimidated by the long lines of bins filled with nuts, grains and flours at your store, but buying in bulk is usually an easy and economical way to buy your food and avoid waste at the same time.

1. Choose the item you want to purchase.
2. If you can use your own container, find the tare weight, or weight of the container, by weighing your empty container and writing down its weight. The grocery store can then subtract the weight of the container when charging for your food or product.
3. Fill up your container or bag with the food or product.
4. Make sure to write down the product number, listed as PLU, from the bulk container onto your individual container.



Packaging of on-the-go foods

A lot of pre-packaged or convenience food comes in non-recyclable and non-compostable wrapping. To reduce waste and save money, pack your own snacks and lunches.

Remember that reusable lunch bags, utensils, and napkins are not just for the kids, but should be used by all family members. Skip the plastic bags and use reusable containers instead. Choose durable bottles for drinks and fill them with tap water or other beverages.

Instead of buying new, you may be able to reuse packaging from foods that you bought or storage containers you already have. If you need an extra set of dishware or utensils, check your local thrift store for options.



Pictured: Reusable sandwich and snack bags and reusable sealing bowls.