



Tips for Waste-Free Shopping

So much of our food supply is packaged in plastic: plastic bags, wrappers, containers, bottles. Since plastic does not biodegrade, it lasts in our environment forever, often ending up in our oceans, causing harm to wildlife. And plastic around our food is of special concern because of the possibility of leaching chemicals like BPA, phthalates, and other additives.

So what can we do?

Shopping at stores that offer packaging-free products is a good way to cut down on all waste – whether plastic, paper, glass, or aluminum. Remembering to bring our own bags, containers, and bottles for this purpose is key. Here are a few ideas for a mindful, waste-free shopping experience.

<u>Food</u>	<u>Shopping</u>	<u>Storage</u>
<u>Bulk Bins:</u>		
Nuts & trail mix	Cloth produce bag, mason jar, or container	Mason jar or other sealed container
Cereal, chips, pretzels, etc.	Cloth produce bag	Cloth bag inside sealed metal tin
Dried fruit	Mason jar or other sealed container	Mason jar or other sealed container
Flour, sugar, etc.	Cloth produce bag	Mason jar or other sealed container
Cocoa	Mason jar or other sealed container	Mason jar or other sealed container
Rice & other grains	Cloth produce bag	Mason jar or other sealed container
Beans & lentils	Cloth produce bag	Mason jar or other sealed container
Tea, herbs, & spices	Small glass jar or other container	Small glass jar or other container
Coffee (ground or whole beans)	Paper bag (re-use many times)	Jar or sealed metal tin. Do not refrigerate.
Peanut butter	Mason jar	Mason jar in refrigerator
Olive oil	Glass bottle	Glass bottle
<u>Other Non-Produce Items</u>		
Fresh bread (sold w/o plastic wrap)	Original paper wrap or cloth produce bag	Cloth bag inside sealed tin or bread box
Olive bar olives, peppers, etc.	Mason jar or other container	Mason jar or other container
Fresh meat & cheese	Stainless steel tiffin or other container	Mason jar or other container
Hot prepared foods	Stainless steel tiffin or other container	Mason jar or other container
Eggs	Choose paperboard & return to vendor when possible	
<u>Produce: Fruit</u>		
Apples	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store on cool counter or shelf
Citrus	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Cool place with good airflow
Apricots & nectarines	Cloth produce bag	Cool counter or refrigerator if fully ripe.
Cherries	Cloth produce bag	Airtight container. Don't wash until ready to eat
Berries & strawberries	Return basket to store or vendor for reuse	Paper bag. Don't wash until ready to eat.
Melons	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Uncut in a cool dry place, out of the sun.
Peaches & most stone fruit	Cloth produce bag	Cool counter or refrigerator if fully ripe.
Pears	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store on cool counter or shelf

Vegetables (Always remove any tight bands from your vegetables or at least loosen them to allow them to breath)

Artichokes	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Airtight container sealed, with light moisture.
Asparagus	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Upright in glass/bowl of water at room temp
Avocados	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Paper bag at room temp.
Basil	Cloth produce bag	Airtight container w/ a small damp piece of paper
Beans, shelling	Cloth produce bag	Open container in the fridge, eat ASAP or freeze
Beets	Cloth produce bag	After cut off tops, wash, then store in open container w/damp towel.
Beet greens	Cloth produce bag	Airtight container with a little moisture.
Broccoli	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Open container in fridge w/ damp towel
Brussels Sprouts - on stalk	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store stalk in fridge or cold place.
Brussels Sprouts – loose	Cloth produce bag	Open container in fridge w/ damp towel
Cabbage	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Cool counter is fine up to a week or crisper
Carrots	Cloth produce bag	Cut off tops. Store dunked in cold water.
Cauliflower	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Closed container in the fridge. Eat soon.
Celery	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store immersed in cold water.
Corn	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Leave unhusked in an open container
Cucumber	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Wrap in a moist towel in the fridge
Eggplant	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Leave out in cold room. Don't wash.
Garlic	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store in a cool, dark, place.
Greens	Cloth produce bag	Airtight container w/ damp cloth or upright in water.
Green beans	Cloth produce bag	In open container w/ damp cloth over top
Herbs	Cloth produce bag	Closed container in fridge.
Lettuce – head	Cloth produce bag	Keep damp in airtight container in fridge
Lettuce – arugula, spring mix, etc.	Cloth produce bag	Dunk in ice water. Spin. Store in spinner in fridge
Onion	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store in a cool, dark, dry place
Potatoes	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store in a cool, dark, dry place
Radishes	Cloth produce bag	Remove greens. Open container w/ wet towel in fridge
Snap peas	Cloth produce bag	Refrigerate in an open container
Spinach	Cloth produce bag	Store loose in an open container in the crisper
Summer Squash & Zucchini	Cloth produce bag	Leave out on cool counter
Sweet peppers	Cloth produce bag	Cool counter or crisper. Wash before eating.
Sweet Potatoes	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store in a cool, dark place. Not the fridge.
Tomatoes	Cloth produce bag	Never refrigerate. Cool counter.
Winter squash	Place directly in cloth tote bag	Store in a cool, dark, well ventilated place.

Factors to consider in extending produce life:

1. Air in refrigerators is dryer than room air. The higher the moisture content of the food, the more susceptible.
2. Produce releases ethylene gas as it ages. Ethylene gas contributes to rot. As a general (but not absolute) rule, fruits produce more ethylene gas; vegetables are more susceptible to it.
3. Don't buy more than you need; shop for less more frequently.
4. If refrigeration is unnecessary, skip it. For example: Heat loving dill does better placed in water at room temp.
5. Make use of crispers in the refrigerator, which keep air moister than in other parts of the refrigerator. Keep ethylene producers (primarily fruits) separate from ethylene susceptibles (primarily vegetables)
6. One bad apple DOES spoil the whole bunch. Discard rotting (ethylene producing) produce ASAP – or at least separate it out.

Sources: Ecology Center's Berkeley Farmer's Market (www.ecologycenter.org); Marin Farmers Markets (www.marinfarmersmarket.org)