

Greening your Kitchen

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Many of us are thinking more about the effects our food choices have on our health and the environment. Choosing locally grown and organic food is very important, but it is also important to examine the processes that are involved in preparing the food, including cooking methods and the equipment that is used. Here are just a few points to consider:

1. Instead of plastic or wood cutting boards, why not try bamboo? What's great about bamboo is that it is a rapidly-growing grass that can be continually harvested. Bamboo has an extensive root system that continually sends up new shoots, naturally replenishing itself and therefore does not require replanting. This makes it an ecologically attractive alternative to cutting down trees which take years to re-grow. Bamboo is harder than most woods, absorbs very little moisture and will not shrink or swell, making it a superior material for use in cutting boards.
2. Evidence continues to mount that perfluorochemical (PFC) emissions from synthetic compounds in Teflon or other non-stick cookware may cause cancer and other health problems. When these chemicals are heated past a certain temperature, they begin to release toxic fumes into the air, enough to poison caged birds in kitchens. Discard any Teflon cookware that has become scratched. Studies have shown that scratched Teflon is less stable and can release these chemicals into the air at much lower temperatures.
3. What happens to our food after the meal should also be considered. Scraps and food wastes from preparation should be composted. If there are leftovers, try storing them in reusable containers. Avoid plastic baggies and plastic containers, especially when storing hot food. Plastics contain xenoestrogens, synthetic substances that differ from estrogen produced by living organisms. Foremost is the concern that xenoestrogens imitate or enhance the effect of estrogen in the body. These substances are hormone disruptors and have been implicated as a causative factor in breast cancer. Heating food or liquid in a plastic container releases xenoestrogens into its contents. Choose Pyrex or other glass containers to store leftovers. They are reusable and are safe for storing hot foods or reheating.

Greening your kitchen involves making environmentally responsible choices regarding ingredients as well as kitchen tools. It means cooking with a conscience.