

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for August 1, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about reducing our use of plastic packaging, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

When you choose a food or other consumable good at the store, how often does the packaging material affect your buying decision? My colleague Laura Stanton, OSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Educator in Warren County recently wrote a Live Healthy Live Well blog article about plastic packaging.

Stanton shares that she has made efforts to reduce her use of plastic after learning that only 5 percent of plastics were recycled in the US in 2019. Around the world only 14 to 18 percent of plastic packaging production was recycled in 2018. According to Yale Environment 360, China used to accept about 70 percent of the plastics collected for recycling in the United States. Beginning in 2018 they banned the import of these materials. Therefore, much less of our plastic actually ends up being recycled than we may think.

Since this is now the case, rather than focus solely on recycling, Stanton encourages us to also focus on reducing. (Remember reduce, reuse, recycle?) In many parts of the world, this month is becoming known as Plastic-Free July. Here are some very practical tips to reduce our plastic consumption.

1. When buying food, choose a paper box rather than plastic cups. Do you look at those price tags on the shelf that breakdown the cost per unit? Turns out mac and cheese from the box is 17 cents per ounce, while mac and cheese in plastic cups costs 61 cents per ounce. Even worse, the consumer is left with four #5 plastic containers, which are one of the least recycled post-consumer plastics, at a rate below 1 percent. Compare this to paper and paperboard, which have a recycling rate of 68 percent.

2. When purchasing shelf-stable fruit, choose metal cans rather than plastic cups. The cost difference between pears in a metal can and in plastic cups is negligible for the consumer. However, the environmental cost is substantial. Just like above, #5 plastic has a recycling rate of less than 1 percent while the recycling rate for steel cans is 71 percent. Of course, fresh pears are

package free. To have the smallest environmental impact possible, shop with reusable produce and grocery bags, then throw the pear core in a compost bin.

3. If buying soda pop, go for cans rather than bottles. Though there is little cost difference between pop cans and bottles, aluminum cans are the most recycled category of aluminum. They are recycled at 50 percent, compared to the recycling rate of #1 plastics which is 29 percent. Also, that nutrition facts label will tell you there are 2.5 servings in a 20-oz. bottle compared to 1 serving in a 12 oz. can, so cans will help with portion control.

4. Packaged food is not the only source of plastic. When purchasing soap, buy the bars rather than liquid. Soap bars are often packaged in paper, which have a recycling rate of 68 percent. Liquid soap is often packaged in #2 plastic containers, which have a recycling rate of only 29 percent. This information also applies to laundry detergent. If you are looking to avoid the large, #2 plastic jugs of laundry soap, consider plastic-free laundry powder, bars, tablets, or sheets.

The Plastic-Free July campaign suggests choosing one type of single-use plastic you typically use that you could do without. Eliminating this one type of plastic you would normally buy—whether it is from mac and cheese, fruit, pop, or detergent – can make a huge difference when we all make a change.

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

I hope to catch you at our next Food Preservation Class. We will be Making Pickles on August 4 at 6:00 PM. You can come in person to the OSU Extension Office or view the class from your own kitchen over Zoom. Register for the in-person class or register for the Zoom link at our website coshoccon.osu.edu.

There is still time to catch a “Savoring Ohio Produce” webinar this summer. The next online class is all about Corn on August 9 (Tuesday) afternoon from 4-5 PM. Visit our website to register or watch recorded webinars anytime.

You can find details about future programs related to financial wellness, food safety, managing diabetes, and more at our website coshoccon.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshoccon County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshoccon.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!