



organo
Et
School



STARTER'S GUIDE TO
**SUSTAINABLE
KITCHEN**

As a vicenarian or someone in their 20s, setting up your first home can be exciting. It is also a great opportunity to be mindful of your choices. How do you do that?

Just get started with your sustainable kitchen!

website: <https://www.organoetschool.co.in/>

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WHY SHOULD YOU START A SUSTAINABLE KITCHEN?

Everyone has spent a quiet Friday night thinking of all the things they could order or blissfully open their 'junk' drawer in their kitchen and pull out a microwavable meal that never disappoints. That ready-to-eat meal rotates around for two minutes and serves up a rudimentary meal along with a pile of non-degradable plastic that sticks around for almost a hundred years. It is as daunting as it sounds, but nothing that can't be fixed. We dig out fruits and vegetables from tins and frozen packets without giving a second thought but what we fail to see are the carbon emissions by delivery trucks that travel distances to deliver these frozen ingredients. The amount of energy needed to preserve these out of season ingredients is masked. Here's how you can get started with your Sustainable Kitchen.



HARVEST



COOK



DISPOSE

KNOW THE STORY OF YOUR FOOD

Maintaining a sustainable kitchen means acknowledging the story of the food that enters your kitchen, from its origin to its disposal. It also includes trying to cook meals at home as much as possible rather than turning to processed food as a hassle-free alternative. This helps us save energy, water (normally used extensively in manufacturing processed food), control the disposal of waste, and at a much lesser cost.

A sustainable meal can be easily decoded by understanding the source of your ingredients, finding a place and time for it in your life, treating your food with eco-friendly and long-lasting cookware and making the most of its remains.

Where to buy your ingredients from?

Eating seasonally is a term that is thrown around quite a bit, but what does it really mean?

It simply is to keep in mind the season and buy produce that is grown extensively in that time of the year in your region. Ayurveda proposes a similar concept known as Ritucharya which means season (ritu) guidelines (charya). It is integral to look back at such practices especially in the age of Industrialisation where we have outsourced the most integral aspect of our life, food.

Remember those times when your mother only got vegetables from your local vendor and haggled about their freshness? Or when you would get to eat her famous mango curry only during a particular season? She didn't have access to buying exotic ingredients, hence her produce was within her vicinity and so was it's vicinity. It's the meagre effort of following these well laid out footsteps.



You can avoid illnesses by refusing unseasonable ingredients which are usually treated with enhancers and chemicals to look 'appetizing'. 40% of food in India gets wasted and a big contributor to this problem is that most of the food doesn't look 'pretty' and 'fresh' on supermarket shelves.

Buy eggs from a local farm or that are not encased in plastic boxes, to reduce the packaging waste. When buying any meat produce make sure you know the origin of a meat and avoid frozen meat. These take up tons of energy in manufacturing, preservation and tend to be derived from places that stand for animal cruelty.



HOW TO PLAN YOUR MEALS?

Planning your grocery list in accordance to your meal is a small step that can go a long way. This is something that is done organically in most Indian households. Being 20-something, we are a curious bunch, who question the validity of every unchanging chore, let's then start with this one.



- Set any convenient time line, say a week and plan out the meals you will have everyday. This could be a mental list, an excel spreadsheet or a page in your journal.
- Try to buy only what is necessary and avoid throwing away neglected expired ingredients or money.
- Rotate the produce in your fridge in a way that the ones that have a shorter shelf life are kept in the front and/or labeled.
- Meal prep by chopping vegetables or peeling peas and storing them in the freezer to increase shelf life.

This may seem like another time-consuming step in your busy schedule, but have some fun with it! Catch up on podcasts or turn on some music or just take some time off to focus on just one thing and forget the world!

What do you need to make your kitchen more sustainable?

Now that buying ingredients are in place, treating them is just as important. Now physically step into your kitchen and observe all the resources around you and their materials. Cooking a meal involves several different processes, it's crucial to substitute them with sustainable ones.

Here are some simple alterations that your naive kitchen can handle:

Water consumption

Saving water by watching the water consumption while cooking is an essential part of maintaining a sustainable kitchen. Regulating the usage of water in the kitchen is an easy yet a very effective practice. Reusing water used for washing ingredients to cook or water the plants is something which can easily be incorporated in daily life.





Reduce single use plastic or paper

One way to reduce single use plastic is by reusing bags. Simple, yet you always forget them. Leave a bunch in your car or a sticky note on the back of the door to remind you to leave the house with a few bags in hand.

You can use cotton, jute, canvas bags or any old bags. You can reuse non-woven tote bags as planters for your kitchen garden as well! Use inexpensive, durable cotton or linen cloth or even car washcloths that can be washed often instead of using kitchen paper towels. This way your plastic and paper waste is minimized.



Kitchen Appliance

Setting up a kitchen for a 20 something can be dreadful as well exciting, which generally results in stocking up on a lot of fancy kitchen appliances. Additionally we are constantly fed the idea that using expensive kitchen appliances will help cook better food through advertisements on digital platforms. This is where we need to take a step back and re- think about the kind of kitchens our mothers and grandmothers have maintained through the years.

The presence of bare minimum appliances is no measure for the quality of food they have been feeding our families for years. While setting up a kitchen of your own, one must focus on the absolute essential appliances that will be required in everyday cooking. But the process doesn't stop here along with cutting down the number of appliances; it's crucial to know the energy efficiency of appliances. This part is not that difficult as all the electronic appliances available in the market have a star rating out of five, where five being the highest rating; lower in energy consumption.

How to treat your Kitchen waste?

Waste Segregation

A significant part of having a sustainable kitchen is knowing what happens to the food once it leaves the kitchen and one way to do that is waste segregation. It is a fairly novel concept in our country.

Waste segregation means separating and storing the waste into different bins based on their contents, mainly, biodegradable wet waste and inorganic dry waste. This way the waste gets treated/processed differently.

TIP:

One small hack to process the biodegradable wet waste accumulated in the sinks is to install a sink grinder which crushes the waste food before releasing it into the sewerage.



Why do Waste Segregation?

What happens when they are not segregated and get thrown together into landfills?

80% of the waste produced by Indian households end up in landfills, which contains a huge amount of wet kitchen waste that in turn produces methane, a greenhouse gas, trapping 30 times more heat than CO₂.

COMPOSTING

An alternative way to dispose of waste is by composting as much of the biodegradable waste as possible, which can be used as manure. Having a small kitchen garden in your backyard or a few plants on the kitchen windowsill can be a good place to use that manure.



Substitute Suggestions

Potato peel crisps:

Use clean and washed potato peels, season it however you like using pepper, salt or paprika and toss it in the oven for 15 mins at 200C. A delicious way to reuse potato peels!



Vegetable trimmings Broth:

Trimmings of beets, carrots or ends of celery, green beans or stems of coriander, cilantro or peeled skin of zucchini, aubergine, and cucumbers can be added along with little olive oil, garlic, onions and water before being discarded. The stock when refrigerated can be used for three months.



Ridge gourd peel chutney:

Save the ridge gourd peels to make an easy chutney base. Just sautee washed peels in a little oil, blend it to a desirable consistency and add it to any chutney base such as tomato or coconut.



Kitchen Garden Tips

Starting a small kitchen garden in your backyard or your balcony can contribute a lot in your journey to be self-sustaining. For some of us taking care of a bunch of living things might be a bit intimidating but plants are pretty self-sufficient and require bare minimum maintenance.

Stems of spinach, aloe vera, lemongrass, sprouts are perfect for a small scale kitchen garden. Growing fresh herbs is easy and very handy, herbs like basil, mint, parsley, coriander, and rosemary can be grown easily in terracotta pots.

- Choose a sunny location to place the potted plants or develop a small garden.
- Make sure the soil is moist and well drained.
- Plant in a stable environment, avoid placing the plants in places that receive strong wind or high foot-traffic so that the small plants don't get knocked down.



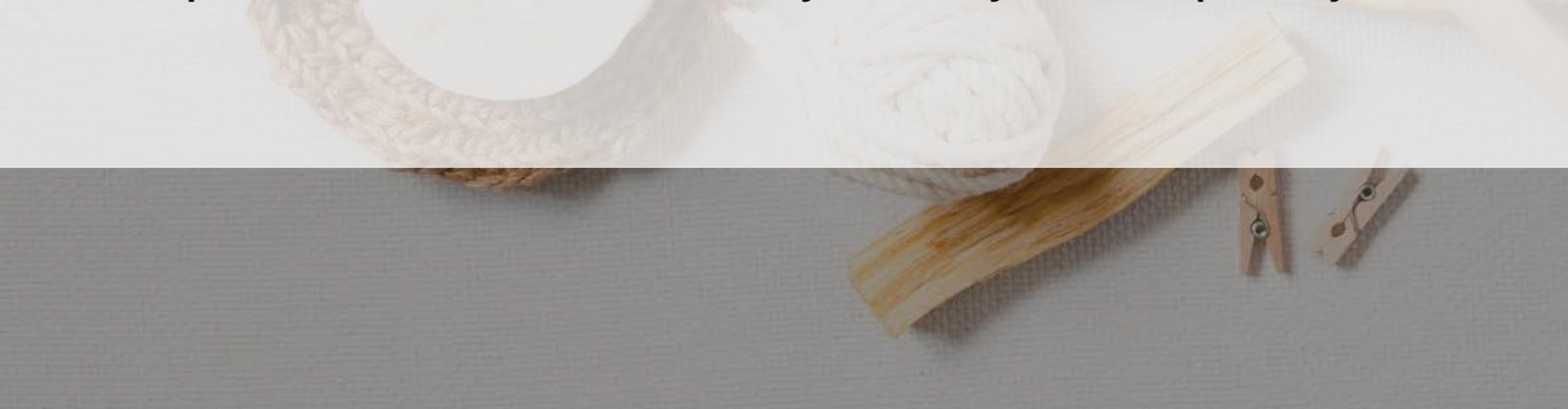
A Quick guide to set up a Sustainable Kitchen

- Start cooking at home
- Buy food supplies locally
- Avoid processed food
- Eat seasonally
- Minimize food wastage
- Plan your meals
- Reduce water consumption by reusing water
- Invest in energy efficient kitchen appliances
- Segregate kitchen waste
- Start a small kitchen garden
- Compost wet biodegradable kitchen waste



Making lifestyle choices can be a bit daunting and confusing when all we have always heard about is global warming, carbon emission, pollution and wastage of resources. But we have to realize that the ball is still in our court and if we make the right kind of choices we can change the world for the better. We need to bridge the gap between industrialization and sustainability by taking inspiration from our old traditional ways and accommodating them into our lifestyle. It's not important that every meal we cook is 'Insta-pretty' as long as you are taking the initiative to prepare it.

Let's take the central axis of your home, the kitchen, and tweak it as a step towards a more sustainable lifestyle even if you do it imperfectly.



Author's note



Nishitha Vivek

Nishitha is a food enthusiast with a flair for baking. She believes that food is an edible story that brings people together and aspires to do exactly that with her co- founded food blog, Knife & Spatula. Being an aspiring restaurateur, she aims to bring her life experiences and passion together on a plate, and live life one meal at a time.

Author's note



Mansi Swami

Mansi is a quintessential 20s woman who takes life by the horns. Although she always has one foot in the archaic world of sacred Rajasthani recipes, she moves with today's times and applies her creativity in digital platforms. IT Engineer by education, she has co-founded a food blog, Knife & Spatula and a t-shirt venture The May Circle. She lives by the motto of making the world a happier place than she found it.

Organo Et School

Organo Et School is the brainchild of team Organo. Organo was founded on the idea of environmentally conscious living and Organo Et School translates that idea into reality by educating and empowering schools, colleges, organizations and communities on the triple bottom line of sustainability. Organo et School aims at engaging individuals of today to stay connected with nature through workshops, live sessions and site visits.



Leading the change

We create an experiential learning environment for people to learn from.

Organo Et School educates people about the challenges of sustainable development and creates opportunities for them to use their creativity and knowledge to pioneer innovative solutions for themselves.

Learners develop a sense of place and belonging to their local community.

NURTURING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL
STAKEHOLDERS WHERE INCLUSIVE HOLISTIC ECO-
LIVING IS CELEBRATED

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