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Hazon works to create healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.

Jewish inspiration. Sustainable communities.

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## *Hosting a Sustainable Shabbat Dinner*

One day out of seven, we have the opportunity to stop creating and start being. To enjoy the world around us, including friends and family, beautiful places, enjoyable activities. To rest and recharge. If sustainability is about living in ways that don't exhaust our resources, Shabbat is a great place to start practicing this for ourselves—and for the world: imagine if one day out of seven, the entire world stopped buying, producing, driving....

But we get ahead of ourselves—this is just about dinner! Or is it? Your Sustainable Shabbat dinner is just one meal, but it may very well be the first meal of the rest of your life (and your guests). All the aspects of hosting a meal, from setting the table, involving your guest, choosing the menu, preparing the food and cleaning up afterwards, are opportunities for you to discover ways to make your actions more sustainable and balanced, and explore the ways that Jewish tradition can support you in living with your values.

This guide will help you plan your meal, think about what to serve, how to set up and clean up, get the meal started, and bring some insightful Jewish learning to your Shabbat table.

## **What is a Sustainable Shabbat Dinner?**

Sustainability is about meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations. For thousands of years, Shabbat has sustained the Jewish people by providing a respite from the work of the week. Creating a sustainable Shabbat dinner, a meal that uses our natural resources wisely, means that Shabbat can continue to sustain us for thousands of years to come.

## **Planning your meal**

### **Set a *kavanah* (intention) to “go sustainable”**

Ask yourself why you’re hosting a sustainable Shabbat and write it down. This is your hosting *kavanah*, the Hebrew word for intention. Attach it to your fridge. In the cacophony of oven-timers beeping, cell phones ringing, and guests arriving early or late, look at your notes and ground yourself in your own words: I want to cook with new fruits and vegetables; harvest herbs from my garden; cook dishes from scratch; use local and/ or organic ingredients. I want to use this Shabbat experience as a way to explore what it means to eat and live sustainably.

### **Involve your friends**

Don’t take on the sustainable *kavanah* alone — get your friends involved! Ask a friend (or two) to co-host the meal. Working together will ease the stress of managing all the details on your own. Then invite them into the conversation about where the ingredients for your shared meal will come from.

## **Utilize people’s skills**

Maybe someone is a great baker—ask him to make challah. Someone else might have a knack for roasting her own peppers or making fruit preserves—find a way to use that as well. Another friend might compost — now is the time to ask her about how she does it. Your Shabbat table can be filled with foods that you make on your own or with friends helping you in your kitchen.

### **Eating together: negotiating vegetarianism, kashrut, allergies and more**

Communal meals pose some challenges for folks with strict dietary concerns, whether this is kashrut, allergies or other food choices. Here are some suggestions to help guests navigate the options with grace:

Have a conversation with your guests ahead of time to find out about special dietary needs. Let them know what you expect to be able to accommodate, and where they may wish to simply bring their own food.

Create labels for each dish listing the ingredients, to allow people to know if the dish is vegetarian, if it contains wheat or not, or if it includes *non-heckshered* (kosher certified) ingredients. Labels can also highlight the delicious local and/ or organic ingredients that you used.

Make it even easier on your guests — set aside one table for kosher food, or one table for vegetarian food, or wheat-free foods, and of course one table for everything else.

## Planning Your Menu — Make Enough but Not Too Much

Do you usually cook for one? Maybe you made dinner for 4 or 6 people in the past. The goal is to make enough for everyone to leave with happy stomachs, but not too much that you have a stomachache after eating the same pasta dish for 5 nights in row in order not to waste it. Reducing your leftovers and waste starts with good menu planning. Here are a few pointers when you are planning a dinner for 12 or 20 people. And if you do have scraps leftover, consider composting!

As the host — and chef — the foods that you enjoy most should be featured. It is no fun to cook a meal that you don't like to eat. When planning for 12 or 20 guests, you should think about creating foods in five different categories.

Whether you call them **hors d'oeuvre**, **finger foods**, or **appetizers**, these foods are generally crowd pleasers and help to make sure no one is going home hungry. Cheese and crackers, veggies and dips, nut mixes, crostinis... the list is endless and they are usually relatively easy to prepare. Prepare 2 options for 12 guests and 3 options for 20 guests; provide one serving per person for each option offered assuming it is an appetizer size portion.



Think "outside the bowl" because your **salad** doesn't require lettuce — think roasted cauliflower and chickpea salad or spring vegetable potato salad.

While some people are salad people, others have lukewarm feelings about salads. You should consider making at least one salad. Make 7-9 servings of salad for 12 guests and 11-15 servings of salad for 20 guests — and of course make more than one salad if you have a salad crowd.

The main event — the **main course**. Decide on one wonderful dish and make it the centerpiece of the meal. Want to reduce your hosting stress? Plan a main course that is baked in the oven — lasagna, quiche, tarts, enchiladas, etc. You can prepare the dish ahead of time and leave yourself free to finish other dinner preparations. If you decide to make rice or pasta as part of your main dish, it is easy to go overboard with your measurements. If you measure out one cup of rice per person you will be eating rice for the next week. Since you are serving multiple courses, 1/4 cup of rice person (and round up to the nearest cup for ease of measurements) and 1 pound of pasta for 8 people should be plenty. Make 15+ servings for 12 guests and 25+ servings for 20 guests.

Based on your main course, one or more **side dishes** can help balance your meal. If your main course is mostly veggies and beans, consider a grain-based side dish. If your main dish is heavy on the carbs, consider a veggie based side dish. At least one side dish also ensures that if someone just happens to hate the main dish you made, there is still another food for them to eat. Make 10+ servings for 12 guests and 17+ servings for 20 guests.

Is a Shabbat meal complete without **dessert**? After all the work

preparing a meal, it is great to know there are lots of easy ways to provide dessert (see **Dessert** section). If you make one option, assume one serving per guest. If you make more than one option, assume slightly less than one serving per guest.

### *Tips for Further Reducing Overconsumption and Waste*

- Resist the urge to cook way more food than you actually need.
- Encourage people to only take what they will eat by making an announcement before the meal.
- If there are leftovers, find a place to either donate them to, come up with creative ways to reuse the leftovers for the next day instead of tossing all of it into the garbage, or send people home with Tupperware filled with leftovers for them to enjoy the next day.
- Serve whole fruit rather than cut-up fruit—it's easier to reuse later if it doesn't get eaten.
- Offer people smaller plates. When you don't have too much room on your plate, you're less likely to take more than you can eat.

***Over the course of one year, the average U.S. citizen will generate 474 pounds of food waste.***

## ***What to serve? Yummy, Delicious Food!***

### *Organic Foods*

Organic refers to a set of farming practices regulated by the United

States Department of Agriculture (USDA). To be certified organic, farmers must use only approved fertilizers and pesticides on their crops, and ensure that there is no potential for contamination from neighboring, non-organic fields.

Organic labels tell you that chemical fertilizers and pesticides were not used on your crops—a great step in the right direction, as these substances damage soil structure, poison farm workers, and may potentially cause damage to consumers as well.

There are a whole host of other considerations around how vegetables are produced that fall under the sustainably-grown category—a name that is not regulated by the USDA. To really understand how your food is grown, it's best to ask the people who grow it. Farmers at farm stands or farmers' markets will tell you about how they grow their vegetables; they may not choose to be certified organic (for economic or logistical reasons) but may in fact follow practices that are even stricter than USDA organic guidelines.

***In 2010, 46% more farmers' markets were operating than in 2000. In 2010, over 6,000 farmers markets were operating across the US.***

### **Local & Seasonal Foods**

Whether you plan a “100 mile menu” where all the foods on your table come from within 100 miles of your home, or you choose to feature a few local foods, including locally

grown foods you are supporting local farms and farmers, protecting local land and a local economy and eating fresher, tastier foods. Remember that the definition of “local” is not specifically defined — so decide in advance where you want to draw the boundary. Even if you don't manage to eat all local, all the time, Shabbat is the perfect time to strive for that ideal. See just how local and sustainable you can go.

***It takes 36 calories of fossil fuel energy to bring one calorie of iceberg lettuce from California to the East Coast.***

Being able to talk to the people who grow your food is just one reason to buy your food from people who grow it or produce it nearby. Here are a few others:

**Taste the freshness!** Local food is more likely to be picked when it is ripe, as it does not need to travel over several days to arrive at the market. Additionally, producers who sell locally can choose to grow varieties of vegetables that are known for their flavor and health qualities, rather than just their ability to hold up over long-distance shipping.

***The standard 'beefsteak' tomato common in supermarkets was actually bred to be able to travel long distances, sacrificing flavor for convenience. Heirloom tomatoes, usually only found at farmers markets or in CSA boxes, bruise easily and do not keep for long—but their flavor is out of this world!***



**Cut down on the carbon.** Nearly one third of all greenhouse gasses emitted come from the production and transportation of food. When a farmer can drive a few hours to deliver their food—rather than ship it thousands of miles across the country or even across continents—the carbon footprint of your food shrinks dramatically.

**Eat your view.** Buying local produce means you're creating a market for people who farm in areas near your city to make a living. If you don't buy their products—they can't continue to do what they do. Family farms all over the country are giving way to subdivisions and abandonment, as farmers can get higher prices for selling their land for houses than for vegetables. This means that food has to travel even farther to get to cities, and those rolling green hills you love to drive through on your way out of town are quickly disappearing.

**Enjoy the seasons.** The Jewish calendar gives us at least one or two holidays each season that call for a feast, and several are in fact tied to agricultural cycles. Using local foods to celebrate means that you'll have different foods for the holidays, because different crops ripen at different times. Eating with the seasons is a great way to notice the passing of the year.

Here are a few resources to help get you started thinking about why and how to eat local.

- [www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org) - lots of general information about contemporary food issues

- [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) - a map-based searchable database of farms, CSAs and markets
- [www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org) - a searchable database of local, organic, sustainable food providers
- [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org) - (Marine Stewardship Council) find out what fish are sustainably harvested, and download a handy-pocket guide.



### *Fair Trade Products*

It is also important to support the workers who are picking, packing, and serving our food. Part of what makes food so cheap is that the people who actually do the work to produce it are paid very little for their hard work. Additionally, many who work with the toxic pesticides used in commercial agriculture develop cancers and other health problems. Agricultural chemicals linger in the air and the soil of the fields where people are working and can make them very sick.

Buying food from a farmer you know and trust is one way to ensure that the people producing your food are treated fairly and paid adequately. [Check out how to locate farmers markets, CSAs, and farms in your area in the Local & Seasonal Foods section above.] But for crops that are produced in other climates—notably coffee, bananas and chocolate—there are a few different certifying agencies that can do your homework for you.

Products with Fair Trade labels ensure that farmers are paid an adequate price for their products. The organizations that support Fair Trade labels also help farmers organize into collectives to increase their bargaining power and make capital improvements to their community, including building schools and hospitals. Look for the Fair Trade label on the following products: Bananas, Chocolate, Tea, Rice, Coffee, Cocoa (chocolate), Fresh fruit, Honey, Juices, Sugar, Spices/ Herbs, Wine.

### *Eat Lower on the food chain*

Consider the environmental impact of your food choices. When deciding about what to serve, you can think through the potential implications of your meal. There are ramifications to serving vegetarian vs. meat vs. fish — and there might be more sustainable choices for the meat and fish you serve that you may not ordinarily spring for.

Customer demand for cheap food doesn't stop with vegetables, and in fact, meat, dairy and eggs are one of the largest components of the commercial agricultural system. As with "organics" there are a lot of terms used to describe feeding and handling practices used. It's important to understand these terms when you're considering what eggs to use for your egg salad, cream to use in your coffee, and meat to serve (or not serve) at a special event.



### **Chicken & Eggs:**

Chickens are originally from the jungle. They like to scratch in the dirt for bugs and "dust

bathe," which is how they stay cool and clean. Chickens are omnivores and need a significant amount of protein in their diet (whether they are being grown for meat or eggs). Poultry products that are labeled pastured or raised on pasture mean that the animals had a chance to run around outside, eat grass and bugs (and likely a supplemental feed as well, which may or may not be organic or GMO-free).

Poultry products labeled free-range, cage-free, or free roaming are all raised indoors in a factory, albeit with somewhat more room than those products that carry none of these labels. Chicken are never given hormones in the US; they are routinely given antibiotics.



### **Dairy products:**

Cows are routinely fed growth hormones to increase their milk production.

The effects of these hormones on people are not fully known, but many people seek to avoid them. The dairy industry has also seen massive consolidation, with low milk prices causing the near collapse of a once-thriving family farm sector in the Northeast. Buying milk from grass-fed or pasture-raised cows never treated with rBST means that you're avoiding extra hormones, and supporting farmers who are taking good care of their animals.

Look for these **Kosher Sustainable Cheese** companies: 5-Spoke Creamery, Mainland Grass-fed Organic, Organic Valley, Redwood Hill Farm, Sugar River Cheese Company, Tillamook Kosher Cheddar



## Beef:

As with dairy cows, conventionally-raised meat cows are routinely fed hormones to increase their growth rates. They are raised in feedlots with thousands of other cows, in conditions that promote disease; to combat this, preventative antibiotics are added to their food. Antibiotics fed to livestock can cause resistance to these antibiotics in people, reducing their effectiveness in treating human illness.

Cows are ruminants, and their series of four stomachs are meant to digest grass and other forage crops. However, they put on more weight (and fat) when fed grain, and commercial meat cows are fed mostly corn and soybeans. This can cause acid to build up in their stomachs, which aren't designed to digest these foods. Interestingly, outbreaks of E.coli that have been fatal to people can be linked to this acid build up in cows: People have naturally high-acid stomachs, and bacteria that develop in a low-acid environment (such as the stomach of a grass-fed cow) can't survive. However, when cow's stomachs become highly acidic, bacteria strains that develop there can also live in human stomachs.

Another reason that grain-fed cows pose health problems for people is the high fat content of the meat they produce. Americans love marbled meat—this effect is achieved by feeding cows grain. Meat from cows raised on pasture is much leaner overall.

The environmental effects of large-scale animal agriculture are

huge. Where cow manure can fertilize a well-managed pasture, creating a balanced closed-loop ecosystem, manure from cows raised in feedlots has nowhere to go. Giant sewage lagoons of animal waste pollute waterways and cause unpleasant odors for miles around.

Finally, the conglomeration of commercial animal facilities mean that outbreaks of E.coli, salmonella or other harmful bacteria can spread to millions of people across the country, and be very hard to trace back to their source. Buying meat, chicken, eggs and dairy from producers that you know—on farms you could, in theory, actually visit—is one way to ensure that your food is safe to eat.

Look for these **Sustainable Kosher Meat producers:** Grow and Behold Foods, KOL Foods, Red Heifer Farm

## Drinks

At some point, your guests will get thirsty. Organic wine and beer can be hard to find — but it is getting easier all the time. Many wines from Europe are completely or almost completely organic even if they are not certified and many more local breweries are opening up in cities across the country.

Explore your local wine shop or market to find out if they carry any of these **Kosher Sustainable Wines:** Four Gates Winery, Yarden Chardonnay Odem Organic, Hafner Winery, Baron Herzog

For a non-alcoholic option, combine seltzer with fresh juice or apple cider rather than soda. And of

course, local tap water is better than the bottled kind.

## Dessert

Serving dessert is a sweet way to end the evening. Apple honey cakes, squash pudding, or fresh fruit with homemade whipped cream are just a few ways to end your evening with a homemade sustainable treat. You can also look for ice cream from rBST-free cows — Ben and Jerry's was one of the first companies to label their ice cream as synthetic hormone free. Also look out for local kosher brands. If you are in the Bay Area, check out Straus Dairy. If you are along the east coast Adirondack Creamery ice cream is worth searching for. And if chocolate is the only way to fulfill your sweet tooth, there are now a number of kosher sustainable chocolates available.

Look for these **Kosher Sustainable Chocolate brands:** Chocolove, Dagoba, Equal Exchange, Lake Champlain, Late July, Seeds of Change, Sunspire, Terra Nostra

## Set up and Clean up

### Dishes & Napkins — alternatives to paper & plastic

Use as many of your own dishes as you can — mismatched is more than ok. If you host often, buy some supplemental plates, bowls and silverware that you can re-use for other future dinners. Use cloth napkins (patterned tend not to show stains!). Or, ask friends to bring their own plate, cup and utensils to the meal. If you must use disposables, use post-consumer waste paper or plant-based ones. For more info

about more eco-friendly disposables check out <http://www.ecoproducts.com/>

### Disposable dishes: compostable, biodegradable, and more

Using dishes and silverware that can be discarded after use have obvious benefits for your clean up. A growing number of disposable dishes are available that use recycled content, are designed to breakdown in composting facilities or landfills. Here's what you need to know about these items:

Compostable products will break down in commercial composting facility; the catch: a composting facility is not a backyard heap, but an industrial-size facility that your city may or may not have. If it turns out your city does have the means to compost these dishes, add an extra bin labeled 'compostable' and ask a friend to help get the materials to the compost.

- Here are some brands that offer compostable dishes:
- Leafware / [www.leaf-ware.com](http://www.leaf-ware.com)
- Go Green in Stages / [gogreeninstages.com](http://gogreeninstages.com)
- Let's Go Green / [letsgogreen.biz](http://letsgogreen.biz)
- World Centric / [worldcentric.org](http://worldcentric.org)

Biodegradable Products are not regulated, meaning that manufacturers may make claims about them that aren't verified.

Recycled Products are a good alternative to plastic if compostable dishes aren't available. Look for the phrase "made with recycled post-consumer waste" to indicate that

the product is made from materials already used once. (Many factories “recycle” waste materials from their manufacturing process, particularly since it saves money. This definition of “recycled” doesn’t mean that the product is diverting material that would otherwise end up in a landfill.)

For recycled paper dishes, consider:

- Earth Shell / [earthshell.com](http://earthshell.com)
- Seventh Generation / [seventhgeneration.com](http://seventhgeneration.com)
- Preserve (recycled plastic products) [preserveproducts.com](http://preserveproducts.com)

Corn-based products. Some new companies are making disposable dishes from corn. In some ways, it’s a great alternative to plastic as they do breakdown in landfills. Some of these products are heat sensitive, so be careful if you’re serving soup or hot coffee! Corn-based products are an interesting development, but corn production in the US is one of the most environmentally-damaging processes of conventional agriculture. The processing required to turn the corn into plastic is also energy intensive.

### **No Styrofoam! Really.**

You have probably heard this over and over by now, but just in case you forgot, Styrofoam is one of the absolute worst things for the environment and your health. Not only does it leach toxic chemicals into foods, it’s made from petroleum, our #1 non-renewable energy source and pollutant. If you take even one small step at towards a more sustainable Shabbat, replacing Styrofoam with any of the above-mentioned options is a great first start.

## **Cleaning Supplies**

Most conventional cleaning products are petroleum-based and have potentially harmful health and environmental implications. There are a growing number of environmental-friendly cleaning supplies now available at many supermarkets — some come in biodegradable or reduced packaging, others are low toxicity. 7th Generation, Green Works, and even Clorox now has a green line of products.

If you want to save money and go greener, use distilled vinegar. Vinegar is a natural all-purpose cleaner. Mix a solution of 1 part water to 1 part vinegar in a spray bottle and you have a solution that will clean most areas of your home. Spray it on your kitchen counter, cutting boards, or stove tops just like you would other cleaners.

### **Vinegar Tips for your Kitchen**

For a clogged drain, first pour in 1/2 cup baking soda. Then add an equal amount of vinegar. When the mixture finishes bubbling, rinse with warm water.

To remove odors from the sink or garbage disposal, pour in a cup or more of vinegar. Do not rinse out again for at least an hour.

To clean a grease splattered oven door window, saturate it with full-strength white distilled vinegar. Keep the door open for 10 to 15 minutes before wiping with a sponge.

## Composting

Composting is a process that helps organic matter to break down into a nutrient-rich, soil-like substance that is used in organic gardening. Nearly all organic matter (that is, plants, meat, fish, milk, cheese, eggs, flower stems, etc.) can be composted, but the actual items that are accepted at each composting facility may vary. Why? Some materials need a lot of heat to break down, and a given composting site may not have enough volume to generate the necessary heat. Other compost sites are concerned about pests; although meat and fish are perfectly compostable, they also can attract unwanted animals, and so many sites stick to vegetables only.

If you have a compost pile at your home, let your guests know about it, and involve them in the process after the meal. If not, see if there is a community garden or municipal composting facility near you, and invite someone to help you drop off the food waste from your meal.

**Food scraps accounted for 11.2% of that landfill weight, amounting to 25.9 million tons of food waste produced in the U.S. in 2000.**

## Getting the Meal Started

### Welcoming Guests into Your Home

You have chosen to invite friends, co-workers, neighbors, and friends of friends into your home to enjoy a delicious Shabbat meal. When new and old friends gather, you want to make sure everyone feels

welcome. An opening circle lets you learn something about everyone in the room that may not come up in ordinary dinner chit-chat. From the start, people get a sense of who they are going to be eating with, which helps deepen relationships. It can also help to focus the group on a particular question that will be discussed during the evening learning. And it lets everyone be heard. You might be surprised at what you decide to share, too!

People might already be chatting in small groups, so gently ask for everyone to quiet down, introduce yourself and explain what is going to happen first, then pose the question and indicate a person to start.

Sample questions include your favorite food or vegetable; one thing you've always wanted to know about baking challah or celebrating Shabbat; a highlight from your week; your favorite meal to cook.

### Blessings

Other than the traditional *brachot* (blessings) and *birkat hamazon* (grace after meals), invite your guests to discuss whom they want to thank before, during and following this unique meal and encourage them to create their own blessings or songs if they so choose.

### Introduce the Food

Help your guests connect to the meal by introducing the food to them. Beforehand, create little signs to be placed by the food with details about what is in the dish — feature the local and organic items. You can let your guests know about the food by answering some of the questions below:

*Where did the vegetables come from?*

*What was a highlight of buying, gathering, or harvesting the food?*

*How was the food grown? Is it pesticide free or certified organic?*

*What was easy and what was challenging about creating a sustainable meal?*

## **Learn together**

*Rabbi Shimon said: If three have eaten together at one table and have not spoken over it words of Torah, it is as though they had eaten of the sacrifices of the dead (Isaiah 28:8)... but if three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten from the table of God (Ezekiel 41:22).*

Learning together over food is a good thing! As the host, you might feel most comfortable leading a conversation during the meal, but you can also ask a friend to lead or co-lead with you.

After everyone has enjoyed at least their first plate of food and before people starting poking around the kitchen for dessert is the moment to bring everyone together. Discussion questions can include: "What does sustainable mean to you?" Using texts and readings are another great way to create a focus to the conversation. How is your relationship to this meal different from other meals, knowing how it was prepared and where the ingredients were purchased?" "What is the connection between Shabbat and having a sustainable meal?"

## **Want to Learn More?**

If you (or your guests) want to learn more about food, the food industry, health and sustainability, here are some good books & blogs to start you off:

### **Books:**

*Food for Thought:*

Hazon's Sourcebook on Jews, Food, and Contemporary Life

*The Omnivore's Dilemma, In Defense of Food*

Michael Pollan

*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*

Barbara Kingsolver

*Fair Food*

Oran Hesterman

### **Blogs:**

The Jew & The Carrot  
[jcarrot.org](http://jcarrot.org)

Smitten Kitchen  
[smittenkitchen.com](http://smittenkitchen.com)

101 Cookbooks  
[101cookbooks.com](http://101cookbooks.com)

Food Gawker  
[foodgawker.com](http://foodgawker.com)

## **Hazon creates healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.**

For up to date information on creating sustainable meals, visit [hazon.org](http://hazon.org) and [jcarrot.org](http://jcarrot.org) and let us know how you make your meals sustainable by contacting [info@hazon.org](mailto:info@hazon.org).



*JEWISH INSPIRATION. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.*

