



## **A Few First Steps to Greening Your Event**

### **Before the event**

- **Forgo paper and use online invitations** like evite.com or paperlesspost.com. If going with paper, use Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper, processed chlorine-free and made from 100% post-consumer recycled content. And you'll save a lot of energy by using printers and photocopiers that are Energy Star certified.

### **At the event**

- **Consider making your event exclusively vegan or vegetarian.** The lives and deaths of the animals involved in producing beef, poultry, fish (and eggs and dairy as well) are generally hidden, and when revealed, are often found to be in conflict with Jewish values. Almost 100% of the animals raised in the US for food are not afforded minimal welfare standards. Raising animals for food is also much harder on our environment than growing vegetables. And many of the animal welfare issues and environmental impacts of meat also apply to eggs and dairy products. We are lucky to live in a time where plant-based (e.g., soy, almond, coconut, flax) milk and other dairy alternatives are widely available. If you do decide to serve animal products, there are still many welfare and environmentally-conscious decisions you can make toward greening your event. Visit [www.buyingpoultry.com](http://www.buyingpoultry.com) to learn more about higher welfare poultry and eggs and where to buy them.
- **Serve locally-grown/produced food** (produce, honey, herbs, grains, condiments, etc.) —aim to find foods from within 100 miles of your venue. **Look to local farmer's markets and CSAs** (Community Supported Agriculture cooperatives). Go to [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) and enter your area code to find information on local farmer's markets near you. Many mainstream grocers also carry locally-grown produce and other locally-made products.
- **Serve most or all organic fruits and vegetables.** Organic food meets certain production standards including growing without the use of conventional pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and ionizing radiation. Conventional pesticides can cause harm to animals, humans, and the environment. Look for the USDA Organic label when purchasing.
- **Serve shade-grown coffee.** Coffee and cocoa farming are contributing to clear-cutting and destruction of rainforests worldwide, often in the world's most delicate ecosystems. By purchasing shade-grown coffee and cocoa you are supporting farmers who have chosen to grow their crops without destroying the surrounding forests. Look for labels like "Rainforest Alliance Certified," which is available at most local grocery stores.
- **Serve water in pitchers with reusable cups/glasses.** Single-use plastic water bottles are a major source of land and air pollution. Single-use plastic cups have the same issues. When they are not

recycled, they take up a significant amount of landfill space and they emit dangerous air pollutants if they are incinerated, according to The Water Project and Ban the Bottle. Learn more here: [thewaterproject.org/bottled\\_water\\_wasteful](http://thewaterproject.org/bottled_water_wasteful).

- **Make recycling and/or composting receptacles available** to your guests—and make sure what’s put in those receptacles is actually recycled/composted! There is no such place as "away." Make sure to label the different bins clearly for organizational and educational purposes. Recycling and composting pickup options vary widely by location, so do research to find out what’s possible in your area.
- Even better, **use reusable dishes, forks, cups, tablecloths and materials in general**. If you have been considering purchasing real dishware, now is the time to do it! While compostable items are definitely an improvement, they are still a single-use product, which means all the resources used to create, package, and transport them (plus the money used to purchase them) were all for the sake of just one, single use.
- **Create green centerpieces and decorations**. Use recycled cardboard boxes to create frames for informational signs. Create art from old books, or raid the recycling bins! Canned goods can be used as centerpieces and later collected for a food drive. If you want flowers, use potted plants and flowers that will be replanted outside to beautify your grounds! **Engage children** and other creative folks in your community in the project of designing, creating and decorating your centerpieces and event.
- **Ensure there is zero or close to zero food wasted**. While it may feel almost genetically impossible, try not to prepare more food than is actually needed! Visit [SustainableAmerica.org](http://SustainableAmerica.org) to learn more.
- **Clean up with green cleaning supplies**. Check out the Environmental Working Group’s ([www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)) guide to healthy cleaning. Whether you purchase them or make your own, environmentally-friendly, non-toxic cleaning supplies are often more affordable. Plus, it’s healthier for you maintenance staff, your community, and the environment.
- **Put out signs at the event** for each of the actions you are taking so those who attend the event can recognize the effort you’ve put into making your event sustainable, and may even adopt a few sustainable practices themselves! Check out [hazon.org/jgf](http://hazon.org/jgf) for samples.

### **After the event**

- **Send home recyclable information cards** with ideas for how congregants can follow your lead and green their own homes and lives. Or, **consider making magnets**—a constant reminder to congregants to put their Jewish values into action and of your exemplary event!
- In addition to packaging helpful tips for your attendees to take home with them, **consider sending “goodie bags” of leftovers** (food and other materials used to build your event) home with attendees and/or **donate leftover food to a local soup kitchen**. If you donate hot or cold cooked or opened food to a shelter with good intent you are federally protected from all liability. If you are interested in donating food from an event via Met Council, please contact: Shalom Jacob at [sjacob@metcouncil.org](mailto:sjacob@metcouncil.org) or (212) 053-8585.

***Visit [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org), and please be in touch with us at [foodeducation@hazon.org](mailto:foodeducation@hazon.org).***