

Greening Chanukah

A Practical Guide for the Home and Synagogue





Prayers Over Chanukah Lights

Before lighting say,

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל הַנֵּזֶה

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech ha-olam a-she-ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzi-va-nu le-had-lik ner shel Cha-nu-kah.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to light the Chanukah candles.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech Ha-olam she-a-sa ni-sim la-avote-nu ba-ya-mim ha-hem bi-zman ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who made miracles for our ancestors in their days in this season.

Only on the first night say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּי וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעֵנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech Ha-olam she-heche-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-higi-a-nu liz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

Welcome!

On behalf of Hazon, we want to wish you and your community a happy Chanukah, and offer ourselves as a resource to you as you prepare for this wintery holiday season. Hazon serves as “the Jewish lab for sustainability” where we explore the connections between sustainability and Jewish life so when we put on an event, big or small, we think about things like reducing the amount of waste we put in the landfill, making conscious and ethical decisions about the food we serve, and educating our communities around the importance of acting for a healthier and more sustainable world.

Many of you - at home or in your organizations - celebrate Chanukah with parties, programs and events. Have you ever paused to consider the environmental impact of your celebration? How much waste is produced? Do you throw away your plates, compost them, or wash and reuse them? Is your chocolate gelt guilt-free? What went into producing the oil that you’ve been using to fry the latkes that you serve to gleeful and hungry guests? These are the questions that keep us up at night, so we’ve put together this handy toolkit to help your organizations make more sustainable choices during this year’s Festival of Lights.

In this packet you will find a brief history of Chanukah with some grounding in traditions of the earth, five actionable steps we’re encouraging you to take at your Chanukah celebrations, and educational materials you can use as part of a wider “Greening Chanukah” initiative.

If you already implement some of our suggestions, great! But we also invite you to take on one or two more actions this year as we all work to create a healthier and more sustainable world. For more suggestions than what we have here, check out [Hazon.org/Chanukah](https://hazon.org/Chanukah).



The Story of Chanukah and Why it Matters

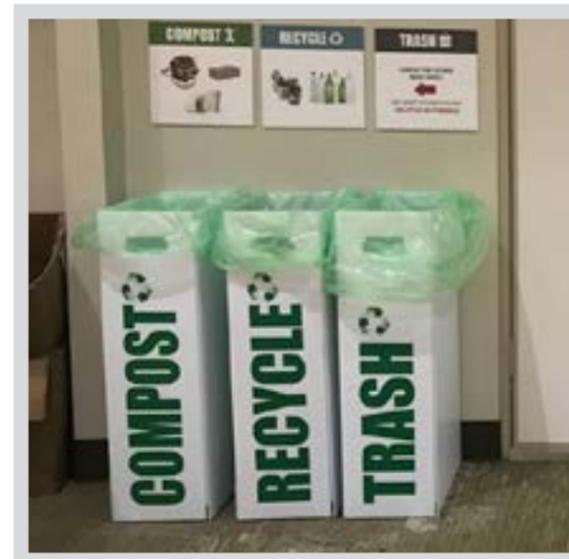
For much of Jewish life, our rituals and traditions revolved around the Temple. As the central gathering place and home of G-d, the Temple was perhaps the most important component of Jewish tradition for a thousand years. Today, our lives can feel disconnected from the ancient wonders of Temple life but Chanukah serves as a reminder of the reverence we once shared for this great structure. As the Talmud story goes, after an uprising against Greek and Syrian oppressors (also known as the Maccabean Revolt) the victors wanted to rededicate the Temple by lighting the central menorah which stood as a reminder of the power and presence of G-d. With a battle still raging outside the Temple walls, those tasked with renewing the space found themselves short on oil to light the menorah. Once lit, the menorah must never go out and the victors only had enough for one day. They also knew it would take approximately eight days to get more supplies. But miraculously, the oil lasted! Since then we have celebrated the Festival of Lights as a reminder of the power of G-d even in our darkest times.



But Chanukah can also be viewed in light of our contemporary challenges. It asks us to consider carefully where our resources come from, what happens when they run out, and how we can build a sustainable world that renews our bounty for many generations to come. In times of struggle it is amazing how far we can make a little go and in times of great bounty it is remarkable how excessive our behaviors can become. The story of the oil offers both a check on our behaviors but also a deep grounding in the traditions of the land. The oil used in this story would have been olive oil, produced from trees grown in the north of Israel, harvested and pressed by hand and then transported on foot or by pack animal to the Temple. When we think about this process, every step of the way reminds us of our connection to the earth. Chanukah offers a chance to reconsider the impact we want to leave on the world; to cut back where we can or to leave a lighter touch when possible.

Greening Chanukah

Dispose of Waste Properly!



Ensuring that waste goes to the right place is an easy way to minimize the impact of a holiday event. Most waste falls into one of three categories: compost, recycle and trash. Composting has two main benefits. It reduces the amount of methane - a greenhouse gas 34 times more potent than CO₂ - released from landfills and its end result is new, healthy soil which can be used in your garden to improve plant health. By repurposing old products into new materials, recycling reduces the environmental impacts associated with creating new plastic, fiber, and metal products. Municipalities and private waste haulers generally include recycling with their existing services, some even include compost pick-up! Research what compost services are

available locally at compostnow.org. Guidelines and regulations for composting and recycling vary by waste hauler and municipality, so be sure to check-up on them.

Fry Up Some Local Latkes!

Much of the produce at the market comes from a farm across the country or even across the globe. The fossil fuel that is burned while refrigerating and transporting food long distances adds up to significant greenhouse gas emissions which accelerate climate change. Buying potatoes sourced from a local farm reduces the energy needed to get the tubers from farm to table, meaning your latkes will tread a bit lighter on the Earth. Find a local market that sources potatoes regionally. If the source of the spuds aren't labelled, ask a staff member! Or, sign-up for a fall CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) share with a local farm. Fall CSA shares have plenty of potatoes in addition to turnips, beets and other root vegetables that can also be made into tasty latkes. Find local food near you using localharvest.org.



Greening Chanukah

Make it a Plant Forward Meal!



Animal agriculture has many negative environmental impacts. It uses tremendous amounts of land and fresh water, drives global deforestation, and releases methane into the atmosphere. By swapping out animal-based products in your diet for plant-based alternatives, your meal's impact on the planet is greatly reduced. For this year's latkes, explore replacements for eggs like ground flaxseed "eggs" or store-bought vegan eggs. Top off your potato pancake with applesauce instead of sour cream, or try making a simple homemade cashew cream as a substitute. Find more plant-based alternatives and learn how plant-based substitutes benefit the planet at omdfortheplanet.com.

Purchase Fair Trade Chanukah Gelt!



Chocolate, while delicious, is one of the most exploited industries in the world. From the farmers to the laborers, chocolate is often a dirty business. A great way to support sustainable alternatives is by purchasing chocolate that is certified as Fair Trade.

Fair Trade means that farmers and laborers are paid a fair and livable wage for their products, while also ensuring some environmental protections for the farms they purchase from. While Fair Trade Gelt may not be available on your grocery shelf, [Divine Chocolate](#) and [Lake Champlain Chocolate](#) sell Fair



Trade chocolate coins and Fair Trade chocolate bars are becoming more readily available in local stores. Look for other Fair Trade certificated products, such as coffee, to increase your impact throughout the year! More resources about Fair Trade and Judaism are available from our friends at [T'ruah](#), a network of rabbis and cantors calling for action on human rights issues.

Greening Chanukah

Fry Your Chanukah Treats in RSPO-Certified Palm Oil!

Each year, we celebrate the miracle of Chanukah by frying food (often potato pancakes and sufganiyot/donuts) in oil. The least expensive oil options are often vegetable or canola, earning them a front-shelf spot in the pantry. These bottles typically contain a blend of oils, including one derived from palm trees. This tree is being relied upon more and more due to its relative speed of growth, its versatility, and its high yield. Unfortunately, with minimal regulation, palm oil production is causing a huge detriment to the Earth, animals, and the people who harvest it.



While oil is a tricky topic, RSPO-certified palm oil is a better option than most. Baking, rather than frying, latkes is your best bet to ensure the oil really lasts. And coconut oil, cold-pressed sunflower, or other local oil options can be a great alternative, too. But for big batches, when you've just got to fry up those crispy potato pillows of goodness, we recommend using RSPO-certified palm oil. See the diagram on page 5 for a better understanding of what irresponsibly harvested palm oil means for the creatures and land with whom we share the planet, and how a little extra care can go a long way.

RSPO Palm Oil FAQ

The [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil](#) is an organization that certifies palm oil if it meets certain sustainability criteria. According to their website, "one of the most important RSPO criteria states that no primary forests or areas which contain significant concentrations of biodiversity (e.g. endangered species) or fragile ecosystems, or areas which are fundamental to meeting basic or traditional cultural needs of local communities (high conservation value areas), can be cleared [to grow oil palm trees]." RSPO-certified palm oil is widely promoted by the [World Wildlife Foundation \(WWF\)](#), which also created this handy "[Palm Oil Buyers Card](#)" in 2016, to see which everyday companies are committing to using only sustainable oil.

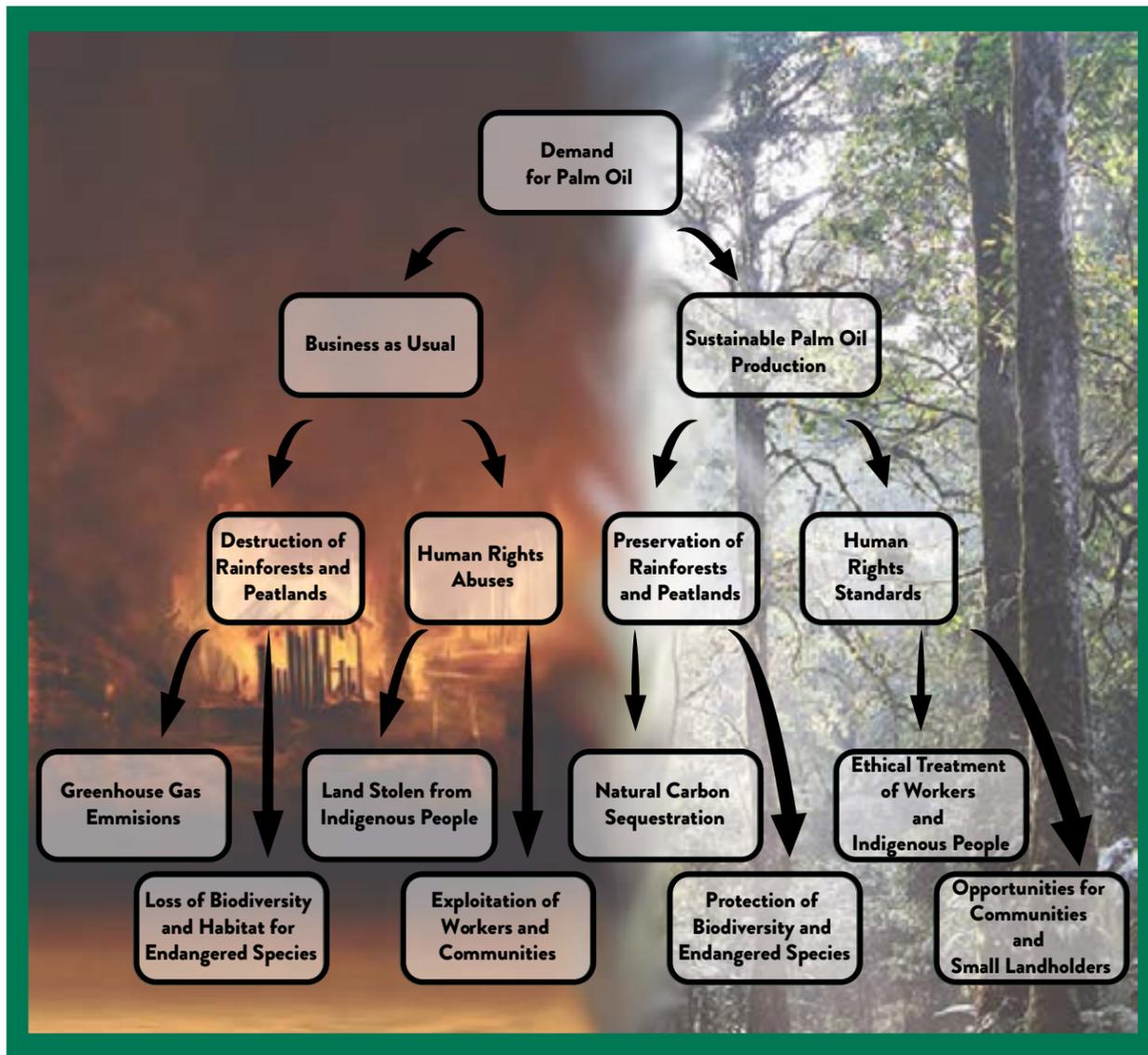
How to Cook Using Palm Oil

Similar to coconut oil and shortening, palm oil is semi-solid at room temperature. Not to worry though - it is easy to scoop out and plop into the frying pan where it will quickly liquify to look and act like any other oil. Cook on high heat and enjoy delicious, earth-conscious latkes!

***Tip:** Briefly heat a spoon over the burner and use it to smoothly and easily scoop the oil out of the container.

Greening Chanukah

Palm trees are typically grown in rainforests which help balance the Earth's natural carbon cycle. Think of the planet as having many carbon bank accounts, when too much carbon has been moved from other accounts into the atmosphere in the form of CO₂, the climate warms. Rainforests have some unique carbon bank accounts that sequester carbon - meaning it is securely held in place unless there is a major disturbance. It takes hundreds of years to sequester carbon, and only a few months to release it into the atmosphere through deforestation. Preserving rainforests protects these carbon banks and continues natural processes that move carbon out of the atmosphere.



How to acquire RSPO-certified palm oil for Chanukah?

Easy. You can order online! [Essentialdepot.com](https://essentialdepot.com) has [OU-certified](#) kosher offerings.

Ways to Get Involved with Hazon

Brit Hazon Commit to Change



The word "brit" means covenant; the word "hazon" means vision. The Brit Hazon is our opportunity to make a personal commitment to do better – to take a stand and take action – as we manifest our vision of a more sustainable and equitable world for all. We are in a global climate crisis and Jewish tradition compels us to respond. As part of this call to action we invite you to do three things: 1) commit to changing a personal behavior to minimize your impact on the earth; 2) speak up and advocate for change in your community or government; 3) donate your time or money to an organization that is doing something about climate change. Learn more at Hazon.org/Brit.



Hazon Seal of Sustainability

The Hazon Seal of Sustainability is a 12-month program designed to support organizations and communities working to create a healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable world for all. We do this by linking Jewish values to substantive action toward sustainability and climate-centered goals. Jewish organizations and community groups interested in deepening their sustainability practices, joining or creating a regional cohort of like-minded institutions, or becoming part of a larger climate focused community with access to professional and peer-to-peer resources are invited to [apply](https://seal.hazon.org/apply) at seal.hazon.org/apply.



Share your green Chanukah celebration with us online using this hashtag

#GreeningChanukah



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Ways to Get Involved with Hazon

Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center and Adamah

[Hazon's Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center](#), located on 400 acres in Falls Village, CT, is a year-round farm-to-table, kosher, pluralistic retreat center that serves over 6,000 guests of all ages and backgrounds each year. Isabella Freedman hosts holiday retreats as well as dozens of synagogues and professional groups each year. We also welcome weddings, b'nai mitzvah, and other private events for families, organizations, or friends. While you're there, check out [Adamah](#), a three-month, transformative, immersive experience bringing Jewish tradition, farming, and earth-based education to life. Can't make it to the farm? Check out Adamah At Home for a similar experience online.



Learn with Us!

Each week we share our newsletter as both a way to stay updated with what we are doing but also as a way to learn with us around the intersection of Jewish tradition and modern life. We invite you to [sign up for our newsletter](#) or for our weekly Shmita blog to learn more about the intersection of ancient wisdom and daily life. We'd love to stay in touch with you!

Donate

Please consider making a [financial contribution](#) to Hazon, so we can continue to provide great resources and community support in this critical moment of climate change.

Visit [Hazon.org/Donate](https://hazon.org/Donate) for more information.

Hazon's Holiday Resource Library

Looking for more Chanukah sustainability tips? Check out the Hazon Chanukah resources, part of our more extensive holiday resource library at hazon.org/chanukah.