

Tips for Zero Waste and Resilience During the Pandemic

While some of our zero waste practices have been curtailed during the pandemic, there is still plenty we can do to reduce waste and become more resilient as a community. Check out these resources and ideas compiled by members of the Zero Waste North Bay Task Force. Also check out the excellent tips in Cindy Albers' Sonoma West Times article [Zero Waste Challenge: Minding the Gap](#).

REDUCING/ELIMINATING WASTE

1. REDUCE FOOD WASTE

- a. [Sonoma County Food Recovery](#). A wealth of information on donating food, receiving food, and volunteering.
 - i. [Household Information](#)
 - ii. [Business/ institution information](#)
2. **REDUCE JUNK MAIL** by [opting out](#).
3. **REFUSE SINGLE USE UTENSILS**. When ordering take-out, ask that restaurants do not include utensils.

REUSING

1. REUSABLE GROCERY BAGS (Yes you can still use them!)

- a. Instead of using single-use paper or plastic bags at check-out, load your paid-for groceries back into your shopping cart. When you wheel the cart to your car, transfer the items into the bags in your trunk. Or- if you walked to the store, transfer items into your bags outside the store.
2. **USE REUSABLE MASKS & GLOVES**
 - a. Make masks out of old clothing.
 - b. Purchase reusable masks and gloves.
 - c. Important health and safety tip: have multiple amounts of these on hand so they can be thoroughly washed after each use.
3. **REDUCE PAPER TOWELS** Make a kitchen drawer filled with clean rags (old cut-up towels, flannel sheets) and use them for cleaning and spills. Wash with laundry.

DISPOSING

1. SORT CORRECTLY

- a. [Sonoma County Zero Waste Guide](#): what goes in **recycle/ compost/ garbage**, hazardous waste, e-waste, mattress recycling, etc.
 - i. Look up by item: [Zero Waste Sonoma Home Page](#)
- b. [Sorting Guides and Resources](#) from Recology
2. **COMPOST AT HOME!**
 - a. Learn how to compost and why it's good for the climate: [Zero Waste Sonoma Compost for the Climate](#)
 - b. More composting information from the [UC Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County](#)

3. **REPORT LITTER** through "[SoCo Report It](#)". Litter ends up in waterways and in animals' stomachs.

PURCHASING

1. BUY & USE ITEMS that are

- a. **Large sizes** and as **minimally packaged** as possible.
 - i. We can't buy in bulk, but we can buy larger packages with less individual wrappings.
 - ii. You can special order gallon-sized containers of shampoo, conditioner, liquid soap, etc from Community Market
- b. **Essential and necessary** for you and something that you don't already have too much of (to ensure others also have the option to get their essentials)
- c. Made of the **highest recycled content**.
- d. **Reusable, recyclable, and/or compostable packaging**. Choose glass or aluminum containers if you want to cut down on plastic
- e. **Local to Sonoma County** (this supports our local economy and businesses to recover faster from this crisis and ensures a lower carbon footprint)

2. WATER

- a. If possible, **invest in a water filtration system** at home so that you have to make less or no trips to the grocery store for bulk or water.
- b. If you need to purchase water:
 - i. Purchase **larger containers**, rather than individual bottles.
 - ii. Purchase water in containers **made with recycled materials and/or minimal packaging**.

3. TOILET PAPER

- a. Purchase TP **made from recycled paper**.
- b. Made with **recyclable/compostable packaging** if possible.

4. COFFEE

a. To-go coffee:

- i. **Patronize your local coffee shops** if possible.
 1. Purchase the **smallest size** so that less waste is made with the cup. For example, cappuccinos, macchiatos, etc. all have smaller cups than regular coffees, therefore smaller amounts of landfill waste and they also don't usually require a lid. They have just as much caffeine, if not more.
 2. **Bring your reusable straw** or use their single-use straw provided, only if a paper straw.

b. Coffee for home:

- i. Try to **purchase whole beans** from a local coffee shop or company from your local grocery store.

5. SANITIZERS

- a. **Create your own sanitizers** in reusable containers with reusable wipes.
- b. If you cannot or don't want to create your own sanitizers and wipes, **use sanitizers from a local company made with sustainable materials**. EO, for example, uses a material in their wipes that is not petroleum plastic and their plastic wipe hard plastic containers are recyclable.

6. ONLINE SHOPPING

- a. If you must shop online:
 - i. Choose a company that is:
 1. **Local to Sonoma County** if possible.
 2. **Uses alternative fuels or electric vehicles**, if possible.
 - ii. Add things to your cart but don't purchase until you absolutely need something in your cart. In other words, **make purchases less frequently** so that the order can be consolidated in packaging and less trips made to your residence.
 - iii. Choose the **longer delivery time** (some companies will give you perks if you choose a longer delivery time)
 - iv. Create a note in your order **requesting less packaging, recycled packaging, recyclable or compostable packaging**, etc.

A discussion hosted by a CDC doctor advisor, the founder of TerraCycle and Loop, and others on how safe reusables are at this time: [INDISPOSABLE: The Safety and Future of Reuse](#)

- Addresses misinformation on disposal plastics being "safer" or more sanitary.