

Eat Seasonally **Use local produce**

Beware of food that is air-flown

Choose organic when it is the best possible alternative

Reduce food waste

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The Nordic Wellbeing Guide to Responsible Eating

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Establish base foods and luxury foods

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Reduce your consumption of rice and shrimps

Eliminate foods produced using antibiotics

Avoid food from endangered species

Reduce your consumption of manufactured drinks

Drink organic coffee

Use foods from the wild when available

Choose least packaging and paper packaging

Invest in sturdy shopping bags

Can you walk or bike to the store?

Choose the least processed version

Be eco-smart in your kitchen



The Nordic Wellbeing Guide to Responsible Eating

The old adage 'you are what you eat' has just got bigger. Today 'your planet is what you eat'. This guide has been designed based on existing knowledge and information about food, climate, health and ethics. Please send us any updates you may have to eating_guide@nordicwellbeing.com so that we can keep the guide current, accurate and useful for all users.

Reasons to adopt a responsible approach to eating

Eating responsibly is good for your health! A clean, sustainable planet means a healthier you. Many of the in-built dimensions of responsible eating are also directly linked to better health.

The earth is not big enough to sustain our current food consumption patterns If everyone lived like the average person in the industrialized world, we would need several earths in addition to the one we have. Food is an important element of this over-use.

Emission of green-house gases from food production, processing and transportation constitutes a high percentage of our contribution to global warming and climate change About 30 percent of your household's impact on climate comes from food production.

We threaten bio-diversity which is essential to the continuation of human life on earth Through over-use of the planet's resources and by planting vast tracts of the same type of crop, we gradually exterminate the possibilities for the continuation of our sources of nutrition. New plants and animals resistant to diseases cannot emerge.

We leave toxins in the environment

These degrade the quality of the soil, water and air eventually leading to lower and poorer quality yields. The drastic reduction of pollinating insects is partly a result of pesticides in the environment combined with diseases and reduced diversity of the landscape. It takes 20-25 people to pollinate as many trees as two bee colonies can manage.

We overuse antibiotics 70 percent of all antibiotics are used for otherwise healthy animals, fowl and fish in order to get them to grow faster and survive crowded, unhealthy and ethically non-defendable conditions. Resistant stems of bacteria develop making it increasingly difficult for us to fight disease.

The run-off of nutrients (in fertilizer) changes the habitat of our lakes, rivers and seas, destroying an essential resource for the survival of aquatic species and ourselves.

We manipulate gene structures. The jury is still out: is it a great hope to feed more people or is it a future ecologic disaster?

We deplete fresh water resources

Heavy use of fresh water for cultivation, animal husbandry and food processing wastes our most essential resource of all for which human conflicts are already emerging.

We cause deforestation About 80 percent of the global destruction of forests is due to the expansion of agriculture. Forests are essential for the absorption of CO².



How to pursue a healthy and responsible approach to eating



- 1. Eat Seasonally** What is produced in season (preferably where you live) requires less energy inputs than what has to be produced in green houses. It requires less storage and can be kept fresh, not frozen. Going seasonal adds nutrients, taste and variety to your meal plan. Make up your list of seasonal (and local) ingredients.
- 2. Use local produce** Eating locally and seasonally goes hand-in-hand for the most part, but not always. Purchasing tomatos mid-winter from the local heated greenhouse, a major fossil fuel user, is one example of how eating locally can go wrong. It may be better to purchase tomatoes grown in unheated greenhouses from a southern climate if they haven't been air-flown in.

Promoting local farmers and food artisans is a good thing, as smaller operators tend to be more innovative when it comes to responsible farming and food production. Growing some of your own food without pesticides and transport requirements is a great contribution to your new local consumption approach. Map your local food producers and figure out how you can make buying their produce practical. It seems more time-consuming at first but you might find that some even deliver to your door!

Remember that eating locally is most important when it comes to vegetables and fruits from a climate point of view. An extra bonus if you live in a cold climate is that your fruits and vegetables likely have less pesticide traces on them since less pesticides are required in colder climates overall.

Beware of food that claims to be local but that has travelled all around the country to be processed before you purchase it locally.

- 3. Beware of food that is air-flown** It's not always easy to tell but sometimes that information is available and, if so, try to reduce your consumption of that particular brand of food. Long distance transport of produce by ship is much favourable to this, even with longer refrigeration requirements.
- 4. Choose organic when it is the best possible alternative**

The ecological revolution seems here to stay and this is a good thing. It frequently results in the production of more nutritious food without the use of environmentally harmful pesticides and with the use of farming techniques that are more holistic and sustainable for the future of our agriculture. Whether choosing organic is always the most environmentally responsible food choice at present is still in question. Purchasing air-flown fresh produce that is organic is one such example, although there are those who support organic producers no matter where they are just to support the organic movement.

Bananas provide an example of where the organic choice clearly is always best. Conventional bananas are a sterile cross from two wild varieties. This form of banana does not support biodiversity and has become highly susceptible to disease for which they are heavily sprayed and fertilized. These poisons leak into the ground water and have resulted in lethal illnesses such as cancer for populations surrounding the plantations.

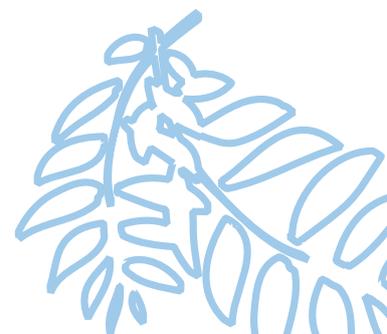
5. **Reduce food waste** Almost a third of all foods we buy ends up in methane producing waste heaps. Try to stay away from purchasing big-packs of food. Consider purchasing better quality and less for the same amount that you would normally spend. Learn how to plan meals so that you make correct quantities. Learn how to use the leftovers innovatively. Set up a composter so that you can dispose of food waste.
6. **Eat less meat and choose your meat with care** Eating red meat daily is neither sustainable nor healthy. Almost 40 percent of the world's total grain production goes to the production of animal feed (in the United States that is 70 percent and in Europe 60 percent). The decimation of the world's rainforests, essential for CO₂ absorption, is to a great extent due to soy cultivation for animal feed production. Meat is perhaps the most resource intensive food we can consume. For example, 1 kg or 2.2 lbs of corn requires roughly 450 liters or 120 gallons of water to produce whereas 1 kg or 2.2 lbs of beef requires roughly 16,000 liters or 4227 gallons. The production of methane gas by cattle contributes about the same or more than cars do to atmospheric warming.

Meat produced from slower-growing grazing cattle has the advantage that it is more nutritious (contains more traces of Omega-3 fatty acids) and the cows keep the landscape open to encourage biodiversity. On the other hand, the methane is more easily emitted into the atmosphere than for soy-fed cattle in-doors. Consumption of meat from milk-producing cows is a more resource-efficient approach but this type of consumer information is not available so far. Be aware that South American meat, particularly Brazilian, is often produced at the expense of rainforest destruction.

Lamb raised seasonally and allowed to graze in the summer and autumn before slaughter, is significantly more environmentally friendly than lamb that has been fed hay and commercially produced feed during the winter.

Pork and chicken are somewhat more environmentally considerate as these animals do not produce methane gas. However, the same problem of feed as for cattle exists. An additional issue is ethical. Large pork and chicken producers are notorious for the miserable conditions that these animals live their short lives in. Long distances of transport in cramped and stressful conditions to slaughter reduce the quality of the meat and present an ethical problem. Handling of the animals at point of slaughter has also been a thorny issue in the Nordic countries and elsewhere. Ecological producers which take a more holistic view of animals offer a significant plus for your decision-making in this case. The same is true for eggs.

7. **Establish base foods and luxury foods** Establish what your 'staple' foods are based on health needs and what is available seasonally and locally. For foods that do not fit this profile, make them a part of your 'luxury foods' list that you eat occasionally as a reward but not as a base food. Meat is a good example of a food that should be a luxury item. If you are not a vegetarian take meat-free days and try to increase them. Try other protein-rich sources of food such as beans and pulses. Make the luxury foods a side-dish rather than the main focus of the meal.



8. Reduce dairy product consumption Consumption of dairy products from soy-fed (or other manufactured feed) cows raises the same dilemma as for red meat consumption. The best possible dairy product you can buy is likely one produced locally from cows that are allowed to graze.

9. Reduce your consumption of rice and shrimps Unfortunately, these two favorites, frequently consumed in sushi, are environmentally hazardous in the form they are available today. Rice is a major methane-producing crop as a result of the fact that when the fields are covered with water they cannot 'breathe' and produce methane. Rice paddies have traditionally provided wetlands that are an important source of biodiversity. The use of pesticides has changed this equation.

Shrimp and crayfish both require a high use of fossil fuels to trawl the ocean bringing up with them smaller fish that cannot be used. Shrimp farms in the tropics are notorious for their destruction of mangroves vital to healthy coastal ecology.

10. Eliminate foods produced using antibiotics The use of this miracle medicine in food production is driven by greed in order to make cows, pigs, chickens, farmed fish and shrimps grow faster and survive under more crowded and otherwise unhealthy conditions. In some Western countries 70 percent of all antibiotics used are for healthy animals. The risks that antibiotics, which have saved millions of human lives, become less effective as strands of bacteria become resistant through this exposure are very real and being borne out today with the threats of pandemics that we will not be

able to fight. Here organic cattle farms offer advantages. Request anti-biotic-free food and increase your consumption of fruits and vegetables while reducing your consumption of animal foods.

11. Avoid food from endangered species The best known cases are fish varieties which have been so over-harvested that they risk becoming extinct. Atlantic cod, once the economic foundation of some Nordic countries is an example, but there are many others. Our dilemma is that the consumption of fish is an excellent way to get low-fat protein whereas we know that about 70 percent of the world's most valuable fish varieties are overfished or extinct. Furthermore, the fats that we can get from oily fish such as salmon and mackerel play an important role in protecting us against disease. Check the World Wildlife Fund's [Fish Yes List](#) to find out which fish to purchase and which to avoid.

Fish farming is a fast-growing industry with in-built problems that ongoing research is working on solving. Hopes that farmed varieties would reduce pressure on varieties in the wild may not be met since feeding farmed varieties requires the fishing of large quantities of wild varieties for making fish meal. Roughly 2 kg or 4.4 lbs of wild fish is required to feed 1 kg or 2.2 lbs of farmed fish. Some fish farmers claim that fish farming is an efficient way of using up smaller fish taken in by their nets which would not otherwise be possible to sell on the market. Fish farming has also gained a questionable reputation for its use of antibiotics to keep away diseases in crowded environments which pollute the overall marine environment.



12. Reduce your consumption of manufactured drinks The best drink you can consume from a health and environmental point of view is a glass of clean water from the tap. Many of us never satisfy our thirst in this simple, low-cost way. Rather, we purchase liquid in the form of juices, soft drinks and bottled water. Stop heaving in big bottles from the store and make it possible to visit your food store on foot or by bike. If you really must have carbonated drinks, invest in a soda stream.

13. Drink organic coffee Coffee is the most important legal trade commodity in the world next to oil. The way that it is produced has considerable consequences for our environment. Conventional coffee plantations consist of coffee bushes growing in full sun, requiring large pesticide and fertilizer inputs. Organically produced “shade coffee”, or coffee bushes planted in the shade of trees in a rain forest with naturally rich soil can take advantage of natural pollinators to produce higher yields and also allow farmers to obtain an extra source of income from the by-products of these trees.

14. Use foods from the wild when available For most people living in urban environments, this sounds like a dream. However, if you have the chance, go for it! There is an enormous wastage of food produced in the wild, such as berries, herbs, greens, mushrooms which, left unused, rot and thereby contribute to greenhouse gases. The taste and nutritive value of wild foods tends to be of higher quality than that of the domesticated equivalents.

15. Choose least packaging and paper packaging Much of our food today is over-packaged to meet the concerns of safety-conscious consumers. If you must choose a packaged food, choose the variety in paper packaging or the one that is least packaged. If you have the possibility to buy loose fruits and vegetables or meat and poultry over-the-counter, do so.

16. Invest in sturdy shopping bags Reduce your use of paper and plastic bags for carrying your groceries and invest in some sturdy shopping bags that you take with you food shopping each time.

17. Can you walk or bike to the store? The habit of hopping into the car is so ingrained in most of us that we will drive around the corner to purchase a single grocery item. The impact of purchasing foods that are eco-smart can be negated by your motor vehicle journey to and from the store. Can you purchase what you need from a small specialist store nearer by rather than the superstore miles away? Can you consider spending a bit more, buying less and throwing away less?

19. Choose the least processed version The closer to the original, the more climate smart and (most likely) healthy. Avoid processed foods containing large amounts of water and many imported ingredients. Try learning to make your own equivalent from scratch. e.g. mashed potatoes or breakfast cereal such as muesli. (Check the Nordic Wellbeing Cookbook for our Porridge and Muesli recipes).

20. Be eco-smart in your kitchen The way that you manage your kitchen and cook has significant consequences for the planet. Check our Eco-smart Kitchen Guide.

Check the [Nordic Wellbeing Cookbook](#) for a rating of how frequently you should be using individual ingredients (if you live in a Northern climate)

Sources Johanna Björklund, Pär Holmgren, Susanne Johannson, Mat & klimat, Medströms Bokförlag 2008.

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www.mannautställningen.nu

