

Cliff Spenger's Green Event Guide

Planning a Green Event

Prevent Event Waste in the Planning

Any event, from a family gathering to a corporate luncheon can reduce and even prevent waste if it is addressed in the early planning. Make food waste reduction part of your planning from the beginning. Communicate with your guests about food waste before your event. Email a reminder that states "If you are not able to make it, please let us know so we can reduce the amount of food waste".

If your event requires special equipment first check if it can be borrowed, rented, or bought second hand before purchasing anything new.

Cutting down on consumption is a **Green** choice and it leaves the green in your pocketbook.

Invitations

If your event is informal you could invite your guests by telephone. Sending email invitations is another efficient and **Green** method.

To send a formal invitation perhaps use a postcard format.

Or one sheet of paper with the event information inside and room for an address on the outside. A local copy service will assist you to design your own.

Request your printer to use paper that is at least 30% postconsumer recycled content.

For formal events with printed invitations such as weddings, request recycled paper.

Also, ask the printer about using soy based inks and to recycle the overruns.

Let the printer know that you are planning a Green event and you want your materials as **Green** as possible.

Food and Service

Plan your menu you want with as much organic, locally grown food as possible.

Serving items low on the food chain can help reduce environmental impact on water, energy and soil.

For meats, the negative environmental impact roughly corresponds to the size the animal.

For example, pork is about one half the impact of beef etc.

Avoid products with corn syrup as it is energy intensive to produce.

Minimize packaging and buying products that use a lot of energy to manufacture.

If your event is outdoors, consider "finger food" to eliminate the need for utensils. You could use reusable utensils, dishes and flatware.

If you use plastic utensils, get the sturdy reusable kind. And have a special box or container clearly marked where people should put them after use.

Use reusable cloth napkins and tablecloths rather than paper for special events, family

gatherings, reunions, weddings, and other celebrations.

A fun idea is to give guests permanent markers to write their good wishes or sign their name right on the table cloth.

It can be used in the future at gatherings or as a memorable gift for the honored guest. Serve beverages using containers such as in punch bowls, pitchers or Urns. You could have imprinted water bottles of the event made for each guest and water bottle filling stations. If individual beverages are a must, use recyclable aluminum cans or plastic liter bottles and clearly labeled recycling containers for guest use.

Eliminate the use of straws.

If disposable items must be used, choose paper plates and cups over polystyrene.

Paper is compostable.

You can purchase napkins and plates with recycled content. You can use biodegradable plates, cups and utensils made from corn starch, which decompose after use. Serve condiments in containers rather than individual packets.

Eliminate plastic or wooden stirrers,
use reusable spoons instead.

When you use a caterer, ask for durable goods (flatware, napkins and table cloths) to be used.

Ask the caterer what arrangements are made for recycling disposable items such as wine bottles, aluminum cans, and corrugated cardboard boxes. If the caterer says they are unable to get these items recycled, make it clear you are committed to having a **Green** event and that if they can't accommodate you, someone else will.

Recycling

You want your recycling to be a convenient and visible part of your special event.

Your guests won't mind doing the **Green** thing by putting an empty bottle in the recycling bin instead of garbage can - make sure the containers are clearly marked and conveniently placed.

Find what is recyclable at the location of your party or event.

If curbside recycling is available you might want to stick to what's collected: glass, aluminum, steel food cans, number 1 and 2 plastic bottles, newspapers etc.

If the event is in another location or you're willing to take the items to a community recycling center you can recycle corrugated cardboard, paperboard, mixed paper, batteries and other materials.

Find out what is recyclable in any area nationwide by calling **1-800-CLEAN UP**

Use recycling containers that are visible and place them next to trash cans. Mark each container by drawing the recycling symbol along with the type of item you're collecting "plastic bottles only" or "aluminum cans only".

It also helps to post wall signs at eye level just above the containers.

Be careful not to make the signs too small or the lettering too faint.

If your containers have lids you can even cut the lid in the shape of the container such as an aluminum can which makes it harder to deposit trash items by mistake.

For catered events make sure the servers and cleanup crews know where the recycling containers are.

Ask your caterer or event coordinator if containers can be provided.

If not, you can buy them inexpensively at retail outlets and label them.
If the servers collect the empties,
these containers can be kept out of sight in the serving or food preparation area.
If every spot you place a container for trash and you also put a container for
recyclables, your guests will always be able to separate their waste in one location.

Transportation

If you have a choice of location for your event,
choose the one centrally located and accessible by mass transit. When appropriate
suggest carpooling and other transportation alternatives that use less or no fossil fuels.
If the guests are flying in suggest a "window time for arrival" for fewer trips to the
airport.

Décor

Consider using live plants rather than cut flowers. If cut flowers are used donate
leftover arrangements to a nursing home, a hospital or a shelter. Or compost them.
Using locally grown flowers reduces the energy and pollution costs.
Party favors are a good way to share environmentally related items such as "to go"
mugs, reusable ceramic mugs, recycled pens and pencils (imprinting with the party
theme is a nice touch) or eco-fabric T-shirts.
Be aware that some items imply they have recycled content, when in fact they are only
recyclable.
To buy items made of recycled material look for "20% postconsumer recycled content"
or "this item made with recycled materials".

Photographs

If you or your guests will be taking photos avoid using the disposable cameras. By
using digital photos and sharing via email and social media you are choosing the
Green alternative and saving money.

**Following Cliff Spenger's Green Event Guide leads to a Successful Green Event
and Happy Guests!**