Holiday 2019  Waste Prevention Tips

According to a recent New York Times article (December 2019), Americans throw away 25% more trash than usual between Thanksgiving and New Year’s. We can do much better than that with some easy tweaks.

That’s a Wrap

We spend almost $13 billion on gift wrap! While you want gifts to be appealing, did you know that some gift wrap can’t be recycled - because it’s laminated, has glitter or metallic inks, or even contains plastic? Obviously, gift wrap contributes to that surge in holiday trash, so let’s get creative and find something better.

If you absolutely must use disposable paper to wrap gifts, then opt for something you KNOW can be recycled. Things like newspaper comics or old road maps or brown paper bags. Let the kids decorate the bags - sans glitter, of course.

But why not opt for something reusable rather than disposable?* Consider wrapping gifts in reusables like dishtowels, scarves, or towels. An internet search for “furushiki” takes you to how-to diagrams about the Japanese art of wrapping items in cloth. (Or consider reusable, drawstring gift bags too.) Want to avoid wrapping altogether? Consider giving experiences instead of things: No wrapping required.

Food for Thought

Leftovers, which too often are discarded, happen because we’re not realistic about how much food people will eat. That’s why, per the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), each of us discards about 300 pounds of food a year! Did you have a lot of leftovers last year? If yes, scale down this year.

And why not opt for foods that are easy for your guests to pack up and take, and are also suitable for freezing. If it can be frozen, there’s no pressure to eat it all in a short period of time. Sure, have salads, but emphasize dishes that can be frozen and enjoyed later. Several websites agree that these foods can be frozen:

- Cooked pasta
- Cooked rice
- Nuts (nuts stored at room temperature can go rancid because of the high levels of fat they contain)
- Flour (and it can be used directly from the freezer)
- Butter
- Grated cheese
- Bananas, peeled
- Bread (sliced, loaves or breadcrumbs)
- Herbs
- Stock
- Wine
- Eggs, cracked into small containers
- Meat, both raw and cooked

* The only thing we should be disposing is the idea that single-use, disposable items are acceptable. How’s that for a New Year’s resolution (hint)?