



CURTIS NEWS

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Plastic People?

Food Storage Solutions for Better Health & to Save Money



It's been a rite of passage for anyone growing up in the last three decades to learn how to burp a Tupperware storage container. Plastic storage containers are ubiquitous these days. But there are some potential health downsides to using all this plastic to store our food. We have some solutions for you, and they'll also save you money in the long run.

A WORLD OF PLASTIC PEOPLE?

Several research studies have found that when plastic comes in contact with certain foods, molecules of the chemicals in the plastic can leach into the food or beverage. Certain characteristics of the food item can make it more likely pick up plastic molecules:

The more liquid a food is, the more it touches the plastic, so the more opportunity it has to pick up plastic molecules.

Acid foods, such as tomato sauce, appear to be particularly interactive with plastic.

If you heat a food item in a plastic container—even if the container is microwave safe—the transference of plastic from the container to the food is even more likely.

When molecules of plastic—or more properly, molecules of the chemicals that get added to plastics during manufacturing—get into our bodies, it's not a good thing. They can cause unwanted effects in the human body; for instance, some of the chemicals mimic estrogen. Estrogen, of course, is a normal, essential human hormone; but having too much of it (or the molecules that mimic estrogen) has been associated with breast cancer and other health problems. In general, chemicals that fool the body into thinking they are estrogen or other hormones are called endocrine disruptors.

BETTER FOOD STORAGE SOLUTIONS

The primary characteristic you want in a container material is inertness—that is, you want a material that holds tightly to its own molecules and does not let them go floating off into the food or drink touching it. On this score, glass and porcelain are the best choices.

Companies do make some storage containers with glass or porcelain bottoms and plastic tops. Some of them are oven-safe and large enough to cook in; in those cases, you can simply store the leftovers in the same thing you cooked in. Although these "combo containers" are designed to be air- and liquid-tight, they often don't seal quite as tightly as the best all-plastic wares. But given the health advantages of food-on-glass storage vs. food-on-plastic storage, the tradeoff seems more than acceptable. The glass and porcelain containers are usually microwave-safe, too, though it's usually best to microwave the dish covered with a plate or paper towel rather than the plastic lid.

Stainless steel cookware is also a good choice. If you cook something in a small or medium pot on the stove and have leftovers, just put the lid on, let it cool, and then put the pot right in the fridge. It will mean one less thing to wash, too.

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HEALTH HUMOUR

"Krispy Kreme announced they're coming out with a low-fat, 80 calorie, whole wheat doughnut. They're calling this amazing whole wheat doughnut a bagel." --Conan O'Brien

Sensational & Seasonal! BC Farmers get ready for the local markets

May heralds the beginning of the local markets. A few here or there dotted the map in March and April, but now they come out in every location and every weekend. In May, expect to see:

Turnips & Rosemary are both coming into season! Turnips are high in vitamin C and low in calories. Rosemary contains caffeic acid and rosmarinic acid, powerful anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory agents which may help prevent cancer. Besides the health benefits, both taste fantastic, and pair wonderfully in many dishes.

For more info on what's coming up in BC, check out www.bcfarmersmarket.org. In the meantime, try:

Rosemary Roasted Vegetables

1/2 pound parsnips
1/2 pound carrots
1/2 pound turnips
1/2 pound sweet potatoes
6 medium shallots, peeled
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary needles
1 head garlic, broken up into cloves (with skin)
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Peel and trim vegetables into 1 1/4- to 1 1/2-inch sections. In a 9x13-inch baking dish, toss the parsnips, carrots, turnips, sweet potatoes, and shallots with the oil and salt. Roast for 25 minutes. Add the rosemary and garlic, toss again, and continue roasting until the vegetables are browned and tender, another 20 to 25 minutes. Sprinkle with the pepper, and serve hot.

Rosemary-Pesto Rack of Lamb

1/2 cup packed parsley leaves & stems
2 tbsp chopped rosemary plus sprigs
2 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
1 garlic clove
3 tbsp olive oil
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1-1/2 pound rack of lamb



Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 450°F. Place parsley, chopped rosemary, grated Parmesan cheese and garlic in processor. Process to coarse paste. With machine running, gradually add olive oil. Season pesto to taste with salt and pepper. Place lamb on small rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Spread all pesto over rounded side of lamb. Roast 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 400°F and roast to desired doneness, about 15 minutes longer for medium-rare. Cut lamb between bones into chops. Divide chops between 2 plates; garnish with rosemary sprigs.

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BETTER FOOD STORAGE SOLUTIONS

There is also a free solution. For small and medium storage needs, the glass food jars that you would otherwise throw out or recycle make great storage containers once they have been washed and the label has been removed. Jars with a minimal amount of constriction in the neck—like peanut butter jars—work best. A nice feature of these freebie containers is that you can easily see what's in them when they're in the refrigerator. No more rooting through myriad opaque containers to find what you're looking for.

IS IT STILL OK TO USE PLASTIC FOOD CONTAINERS AT ALL?

It's quite reasonable to have a mix of glass and plastic in your fleet of containers. Use the plastic for solid foods when you have them, and use glass or porcelain containers for the rest. As the plastic containers wear out—and they all do, eventually—you can continue the transition to "more glass, less plastic." If you do continue to use plastic storage containers, you should at least stop microwaving food in them. There is one place you DON'T want to use glass storage containers: the freezer. Crack!

The threat of chemicals from plastic-ware getting into your food and then into your body may not rise to the level of threat posed by, say, eating a bicycle on a dare, but it's a good idea to slowly transition away from plastic storage. The only downside—you'll no longer be able to say, "Uh, thanks, Grandma, but I can't eat any of the leftover okra-rhubarb lasagna because you put it in a plastic container."

CanadianLiving.com posed this question: What's the best \$20 you've ever spent on your health? Here are some of the answers from their editors and contributors:

"My favourite thing is a 'fashion statement' I never wanted to make. It's the baseball cap. I don't like the way they look, but the first time I put one on was a eureka moment: I realized I didn't have to squint in the sun anymore. Plus it protects my face from dangerous UV rays... and those caps keep me cool and comfortable."

"I hung a \$14 Ikea swing from a beam in our living room. That swing was in constant use for years by my whole family -- visitors, too. It provided us with exercise and, when we played the 'catch the pillow' game, lots of laughter, which is an excellent health practice!"

"I went to try Bikram Yoga for the first time and that was the class fee. I fell in love with it instantly and have been going strong for two years now!"

"A wok from the supermarket. It encourages me to steam my veggies, and make my grandmother's Chinese broccoli recipe -- yum, my favourite. Anything that gets you to eat more broccoli is worth spending money on. I also love that I can make quick stir-fries when I get home from the gym instead of buying takeout or delivery."

"A bunch of elastic headbands. I'm an excuse-aholic when it comes to the gym, so my most recent excuse not to go was because my hair is too short to fit into a ponytail so it would get plastered to my face and neck when I worked out. Now I go at least twice a week, and it always helps to bring along a buddy who carries extra headbands in case I try to use forgetting them as an excuse to skip a day."

"When I was a teenager and decided to switch to a vegetarian diet, one of the first books I bought was *Becoming Vegetarian* by Vesanto Melina and Brenda Davis, which is now in its second edition. Their nutrition and eating advice and recipe ideas helped me along the veggie path -- and 15 years later, I still refer to it often!"

"I bought a small blender that I use to make fruit smoothies every morning for breakfast. This helps me get the proper number of servings of fruit every day and discourages me from eating sugary cereal. Definitely worth it!"

"I had just survived one particularly insane period of work and on my first free Saturday morning I swung by a neighbourhood yard sale where I spent \$5 on a meditation album CD. The liner notes described it as "spa music." New to me -- but I loved it. I play it once in a while when I'm getting burned out; it rejuvenates me and is an instant relaxer (minus the ice cubes and olives!)."

The best \$20 we've ever spent on our health



Here are some other answers:

- Hemp protein powder \$10
- Thorlos socks \$14
- Weight Watchers (first week) \$14
- Resistance bands <\$20
- Long underwear \$18



CURTIS CORNER

WELLNESS TRENDS

Prevention. Efforts to control costs are driving more companies to take action on how to assist employees to manage their health. Programs including stress resilience, Obesity and weight loss (diabetes), incentives and flu shots are becoming more popular.

A focus on youth programming. Fitness programs targeted toward children will grow as the impact of health status reports regarding the nation's youth motivate community and program leaders, schools and parents to take action.

Functional fitness and balance training activities. Exercise programming and equipment aimed at improving individuals' performance capabilities continue to be among the fastest growing and most popular exercise options. Health clubs are offering balance training programs and classes for virtually all levels and types of participants.

The mind and body connect for a complete health and fitness experience. Yoga, Pilates, fusion and Tai Chi continue to provide an opportunity and an alternative to higher impact activities while working on "me and reflection" time.

Accountability and measurement-focused programming. Technological advancements are making it possible to document program results. Companies and insurance carriers are supporting Health Risk Appraisals, online assessments and measures of a wide variety of physiological, standard fitness and physiological tests as more emphasis is placed on a monetary return on program investments.

Family Involvement. More employee health and wellness programs are including dependants of families to reinforce health lifestyle habits both at work and home. Results prove that there is a performance and lifestyle improvement when this occurs.

Behaviour Change. Increased focus on supporting habit change results in more permanent, positive outcomes. Whether it is weight loss or poor health, there is significant impact on the workplace. Change support and personal change coaching is on the rise.

Technology. Transcends all these trends through sales of programs and gadgets (pedometers) on the Internet, accessibility to resources, tools, online coaching and outcome measurement.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY OF THESE SERVICES PLEASE CONTACT YOUR CURTIS SITE COORDINATOR OR CONTACT CHARLES CURTIS DIRECTLY AT 604-921-2348 OR charles@curtishealth.com



www.racketsandrunners.ca

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