

# GUIDE TO A CLIMATE-FRIENDLY DIET

Did you know you can help reduce climate change simply by changing some of your eating habits? The American food system is responsible for a lot of the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases we produce overall. This means that the meals we eat have a big impact on our climate. Since we all eat, this provides a great opportunity to make a big difference through small changes.

Some people try to choose food lower in “food miles”—the distance food travels to get to us—to reduce the carbon emitted by the vehicles that transport our food. But carbon emissions differ greatly by mode of transportation: food transported by boat, for example, is much more climate-friendly than food trucked or flown in. Also, transportation makes up only 11% of food-related greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.—meaning food miles don’t tell the whole story.

So how can you eat in a climate-friendly way? Consider a food’s entire life cycle, from seed to plate to compost bin.

## HERE ARE A FEW STEPS YOU CAN TAKE:

### 1 EAT LOCAL & SUSTAINABLE

In addition to considering where your food was made, consider *how* it was made. Sometimes, producing food locally emits more carbon than shipping food in from far away. For example, “conventional” agriculture makes use of chemical fertilizers that deplete soil and require large amounts of resources and energy to produce. Other staples of conventional agriculture include chemical pesticides, which disrupt plant and animal life, and intensive tilling (turning over the soil), which uses a lot of fuel. More natural ways of growing food, including organic agriculture, make use of farming methods passed down over many centuries (see box below).

**LOCAL RESOURCE:** For more information on local, sustainable food in Northeast Ohio, see the local toolkits developed for the region: [www.sustainablecleveland.org/local-foods/](http://www.sustainablecleveland.org/local-foods/)



Photo: Refugee Response at Ohio City Farm

Ohio City Farm, created in 2010, is one of the largest urban farms in the country. Many of the agricultural practices they employ at the farm, such as crop rotation and natural pesticide use, have been passed down through generations of farmers.

The farmers are now selling their harvest out of an upcycled shipping container on the farm and at the West Side Market next door.

### WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate change refers to shifts in weather patterns over long periods of time. Today it is caused largely by human activities, like burning fossil fuels, that produce greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases are trapping heat in our atmosphere faster than ever, causing the climate to change in a variety of ways that disrupt our daily lives. Climate change is already affecting Northeast Ohio in the form of heavier floods, stronger heat waves, and other impacts. To learn more visit: <http://www.gcbl.org/explore/climate/changing-climate>



### 2 EAT IN SEASON

Growing food out-of-season demands excess water and energy, so try to buy in-season foods that are well-suited to your region and grown naturally. Your local farmers’ market is a great place to find seasonal produce. Don’t be shy! Ask your local farmers how they grow their food.

Given our winters, eating in-season foods year-round in Ohio may seem like a challenge. But there are climate-friendly ways to enjoy foods out of season. If you grow or buy fresh herbs in the summer, you can dry or freeze them for use all winter. And fruits and vegetables can be canned, pickled, or frozen to eat later.

#### LOCAL RESOURCES

- To find a farmers’ market in Northeast Ohio, visit <http://growhio.org/farmers-markets>.
- For a list of farmers’ markets that accept the Ohio Direction Card, visit <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ofam/InfoCustomer.stm>.
- To find out what foods are in season, download the Growhio’s handy chart: <http://growhio.org/whats-in-season>
- The National Center for Home Food Preservation offers how-to’s on canning, drying, and other food preservation methods: [nchfp.uga.edu](http://nchfp.uga.edu).



In 2013 as part of a farm- to table initiative, Bridgeport Mobile Market was launched to bring fresh, affordable food to areas not traditionally served by grocery stores. To learn more visit: [www.bridgeportmm.com](http://www.bridgeportmm.com)

## EAT MORE WHOLE FOODS

83% of the average American's household's food-related carbon emissions come from food production—and a large portion of that is processing and packaging. 🌱 The foods that require the most energy to produce are actually the ones that our doctors tell us to eat the least: highly processed, heavily packaged "junk food." Cut back as much as possible on these individually packaged snacks—and beverages, too: instead of buying canned soda and bottled water, carry a reusable metal water bottle and refill it.

Try to replace processed foods, like frozen and boxed meals, with fresh produce and whole grains—known as "whole foods." One affordable way to gain access to these foods is to grow them yourself in your yard or a local community garden. And instead of buying food that was processed in a factory, do the "processing" at home—cook more!

**LOCAL RESOURCE:** Learn more by taking a 6-week Menu for the Future Course : <http://menuforthefuture.webs.com/>.



Community gardens, like this one in Cleveland's Ohio City Neighborhood, are a great way to get access to fresh food and spend time with your neighbors. For more information on how to get involved or grow your own community garden visit : <http://cuyahoga.osu.edu/topics/agriculture-and-natural-resources/community-gardening>

For more information about how to start your own Market Garden visit: <http://cuyahoga.osu.edu/topics/agriculture-and-natural-resources/market-gardening-and-urban-farming>

🌱 "Food-Miles and the Relative Climate Impacts of Food Choices in the United States," by Christopher L. Weber and H. Scott Matthews. [pubs.acs.org/](https://pubs.acs.org/)  
🌿 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report: "Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2009." [epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/usinventoryreport.html](https://epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/usinventoryreport.html). 🐄 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Report: "Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options." [fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM](https://fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM) 🍎 Diet for a New America: How Your Food Choices Affect Your Health, Happiness, and the Future of Life on Earth, by John Robbins.

## EAT LESS DAIRY & MEAT

Meat production is a major cause of climate change: the U.N. estimates that it accounts for 14% of all greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans. 🐄 Red meat (beef, pork, and lamb) is especially harmful to the climate, about 150% more so than chicken or fish. 🌱 In fact, one fifth of the greenhouse gas methane produced by the U.S. comes just from the digestive processes of cows (mostly their burps). 🌿 Plus, clearing land to grow feed and raise animals drives much of the destruction of the earth's forests, which in turn speeds up climate change.

Meat's environmental impact has greatly increased in the last 50 years, for two reasons: we eat much more meat than we used to, and we now produce most of it on large factory farms. In factory farming, livestock waste is mismanaged and ends up emitting greenhouse gases and polluting nearby waterways.

Try to eliminate or cut back on meat and dairy. When eating meat and dairy, buy from small- to mid-size family farms, which tend to pollute significantly less than factory farms.

**LOCAL RESOURCE:** Eat Wild has a directory of smaller local farms that sell meat and dairy in Ohio: [www.eatwild.com/products/ohio.html](http://www.eatwild.com/products/ohio.html) .



There aren't plenty of fish in the sea...  
Fish are a great alternative to meat, but some are over-fished or fished in environmentally harmful ways. For easy reference at supermarkets and restaurants, consult the Monterey Bay Aquarium's pocket guide to sustainable seafood in the Midwest: [www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr\\_seafoodwatch/content/media/MBA\\_SeafoodWatch\\_MidwestGuide.pdf](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/content/media/MBA_SeafoodWatch_MidwestGuide.pdf) .

To learn about local fishing and fish preparation practices that are safe and environmentally friendly, visit: <http://epa.ohio.gov/dsw/fishadvisory/index.aspxf>

## DID YOU KNOW?

On one acre of land, you can grow 20,000 pounds of potatoes, or... enough cattlefeed to produce less than 165 pounds of beef. 🍅



20,000 lbs of potatoes VS 165 lbs of retail beef cuts

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**  
Read the Cleveland Climate Action Plan at: [www.sustainablecleveland.org/climate](http://www.sustainablecleveland.org/climate)



Find this and other climate action tools at [www.sustainablecleveland.org](http://www.sustainablecleveland.org).

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