



# Go Eco Like Grandma Honor Her Wisdom in New Ways

by Avery Mack

“Use it up, wear it out, make do or do without,” was the motto of past generations. Today, it’s recycle, repurpose and reinvent. Nostalgia is making a comeback. It’s tempting to revert to successful old-fashioned ways; it’s even better to update the how-to of natural eco-living.

## Preserve Food

“There are tradeoffs between convenience and environmental impact,” says Kathleen Hanover, executive creative director at Imagine That Creative Marketing Services, in Dayton, Ohio. “I’d love to freeze all of our family’s produce, but after two power outages, I can veggies, too. Steam canners for jams, jellies, tomatoes and high-acid foods use three inches of water and 10 minutes of energy.”

Shel Horowitz, a consultant for Green and Profitable and co-author of *Guerrilla Marketing to Heal the World*, joined a food co-op in the 1970s. Today, it has 9,000 members. “I dehydrate

veggies for soup, pasta, stir-fry dishes or as tomato or zucchini chips,” he says. “Onions, shallots, garlic, leeks, celery, kale, hot peppers, tomatillos and fruit were successful; eggplant, cucumbers and rhubarb were not.”

## Use It All

The Traditional Line menu devised by executive chef Mark Russell, of Great Performances, a sustainability-oriented high-end catering and food service company in New York City, remarks, “Food trends have changed,” noting preserving, freezing, pickling and canning remain sound. He salutes thrifty Depression-era practices.

“My grandparents picked dandelion greens to fry in bacon fat,” he says. “A salad with olive oil and fresh tomato is healthier.” Fermented grape leaves can be rolled up into dolmas filled with local grains and feta cheese instead of meat. He also blanches and freezes cauliflower leaves, warmed in butter to serve; he’s then used the whole vegetable.

Nasturtium leaves are fermented, seeds and stems pickled and flowers puréed. "I make nasturtium flower coulis, bright orange and spicy, to dollop on freshwater fish," Russell says. "Stems are minced into grain salads and seeds sprinkled on slabs of beefsteak tomatoes. Leaves, soft from fermentation, wrap around fresh goat cheese, shred into coleslaw or pair with steamed basmati rice."

## Apply Gardening Tips

Containers ease gardening, especially for tomatoes. Hanover repurposes plastic cat litter buckets. "They're sturdy and hold up in cold weather," she says. "Alpaca poop fertilizer supplied by a neighbor doesn't smell and plants thrive."

Ocala, Florida, reiki master and teacher Debi Goldben employs nature's bounty at home. "Downspouts collect rainwater for the garden, and it's much better than chemically treated city water," she says. Some municipalities, including in Colorado, regulate rainwater collection, mandating the size and number of barrels per property "for outdoor use only".

## Sew Up Repairs

Anca Gooje, owner of Chid Kala, a natural ingredient lotion maker in Scarborough, Maine, uses colorful patches to repair tears and update the look of her two children's clothing.

She also recompressed their sofa's inner springs to their original shape by encasing them in fabric. "It was time-consuming, but only cost a few dollars for fabric," she relates. "Updating avoided creating more landfill. For a fresh look, I made a new cover."

## Multipurpose a Cook Pot

"My mother believed pressure cookers would explode, so I bought an Instant Pot and changed the way I cook," says Sue Ann Jaffarian, a Los Angeles paralegal and mystery writer. "I have a demanding day job and writing deadlines. I toss in healthy ingredients and have a simple homemade meal, often vegan, in a minute. Soup, stew, risotto, pasta, chili, pudding, brown rice and oatmeal work well. It doesn't heat up the kitchen, either."

The Instant Pot works like a crock pot, pressure cooker, steamer, sauté pan, warming pot, rice cooker and yogurt maker, replacing seven appliances.

## Employ Onsite Power

"My Hadley, Massachusetts, farmhouse, built in 1743, might be the oldest solar home in the country," muses Horowitz. "Our farmer neighbors have a methane digester to turn cow poop and restaurant waste into electricity and heat. We'll hook up to it to replace heating oil."



## Make Holiday Décor

"Retro-style repurposing is smart, fun and easy," says upstate New York lifestyle writer and cookbook author Cynthia O'Connor O'Hara. "I glued together assorted cups, saucers and plates with glass-specific glue to create tiered servers that double as a centerpiece. Check your house to find dishware that will look nice together."

It's satisfying to combine experiences with updated technology, save time and support a healthier planet, both during the holidays and year-round.

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