

Food choices and climate change

Your "carbon footprint" is the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by your daily activities. The larger your "carbon footprint" the more you are contributing to the heat-trapping gases that are resulting in climate change. The food that we purchase and eat is an important contributor to your carbon footprint that is often left out of the equation. The production, packaging and transportation of food consume energy and, therefore, results in carbon dioxide emissions. Methane and nitrous oxide, two other powerful

organic produce at the Elitch Theatre Farmers Market or at one of our local markets is the next best thing.

Choose Food with Minimal Packaging and Recycle

It takes energy to make the cardboard, aluminum, steel, and plastic that goes into food packaging. It takes less energy to remake packaging from recycled products than from virgin materials. For example, carbon dioxide emissions are four to five times lower when materials are produced from



heat-trapping gases, are emitted during livestock production. About 10% of our carbon footprint is the result of our food consumption.

Eat Locally-grown, Organic Produce

In order to determine the carbon footprint of a food item we would have to consider water use, harvesting techniques, fertilizer outlays, distance from where it was produced to your home, mode of transportation, the carbon dioxide absorbed during photosynthesis, packaging, and storage procedures. Since this would be a time-consuming calculation, suffice it

recycled steel, glass and paper. They are more than 25 times lower when recycled aluminum is used! Methane, another powerful heat-trapping gas, is also emitted when waste decomposes in the landfill. Recycling and composting keeps these products out of the landfill. If you recycle your paper, glass, and cans you can reduce your carbon dioxide emissions by almost a half-ton per year.

Go Vegetarian, or at Least Eat Less Meat

Growing animals for meat is very energy intensive. Feeding and transporting the animals, and refrigerating

Steps for Reducing Your Food-related Carbon Footprint

1) Eat Low on the Food Chain – More Plants, Fewer Animals

Try all-vegetarian *Karma* at 1575 Boulder St. in Highlands - 303-455-2533.

2) Grow Your Own Food

Start preparing a plot in your yard or call Denver Urban Gardens to enquire about a plot one of NW Denver's many community gardens (303-292-9900).

3) Buy Local Organic Food

Elitch Theatre Farmers Market, Saturdays 8-1 through October 6 (38th and Tennyson)

Vitamin Cottage sells only organic produce (15th and Platte)

Sunflower Market – Look for "Colorado Grown" on produce signs (38th and Wolff)

Safeway – Look for "Colorado Proud" labels on fruits and vegetables (44th and Lowell)

4) Buy Food with Minimal Packaging

to say that growing your own organic fruit and vegetables will reduce your food-related carbon footprint by eliminating fuel used for crop cultivation, fertilizers and herbicides, and food transportation. You can start a garden plot in your yard if you have room, or join one of NW Denver's several community gardens. Buying locally-grown

and transporting the meat results carbon dioxide emissions. Livestock production and associated animal waste also emit methane and nitrous oxide, two heat-trapping gases also contributing to climate change. University of Chicago researchers found that switching to a vegetarian diet could reduce the average American's carbon

footprint by one and a half tons each year and that the average American could do more to reduce their carbon footprint by going vegetarian than by switching to a hybrid-electric car.

Wendy Hawthorne is the Executive Director of Groundwork Denver. Please contact her if you want to share information about how you are reducing your greenhouse gas emissions at home or work. Email wendy.hawthorne@groundworkdenver.org or call 303-455-5600.