



THE GREEN PAGE

A community project to help us live on less, live more lightly, and live better.

December 2011

A note about the font: Hello, readers! You'll notice that I changed the font of the Green Page. Thanks to researching the New Year's Resolution article on page 2, I learned that uses a lot more ink than Century Gothic. I can't urge you to reduce and conserve if I don't do it myself, so I have adopted Century Gothic as the official font of the Green Page.

Easy, Hand Made Gifts

In last month's Green Page, I talked about scaling back for Christmas. However, sometimes we do need or want to give gifts, even if we can't spend a lot—or would just rather not spend a lot. You can make something thoughtful, fun, and useful for someone without having to know any special skills.

Without further ado, here are some last-minute, home made gift ideas that don't cost a lot of money:

Create a recipe booklet for the cook (or the non cook who laments their lack of expertise). Find recipes you know they will enjoy and that they will use. (Allrecipes.com is a good source for this, as is epicurious.com and food.com.) You can keep this focused on a dietary need/preference—low fat, vegan, vegetarian, sweets, etc.—whatever the recipient's needs are.

Make a dried soup mix. This is actually quite easy (<http://www.allrecipes.com> has some recipes for this). Layer the dried ingredients in a pint jar, cover, wrap some ribbon around the rim for decoration and add a tag with cooking directions. There are many different kinds of "instant" (or mostly instant) soups you can make for people this way. You can also go to Budget 101 (<http://www.budget101.com>) to find recipes for drink mixes (see right for a sample recipe). Mixes in a Jar (<http://www.mixesinajar.com/>) is also a great website for this. You can also create mixed seasoning or drink mixes. (See sidebar for two recipes.)

Burn a CD with the recipient's favorite songs on it. Or take a photo that the recipient would enjoy and put it in a frame. Take photos you already have of your recipient and mutual friends and/or family members on disc and have them made into a calendar.



Homemade Mixes

These were taken from www.Budget101.com.

Taco Seasoning Mix

6 Tsp. Chili Powder
5 Tsp. Paprika
4 1/2 Tsp. Cumin
3 Tsp. Onion Powder
2 1/2 Ts Garlic Powder
1/8 Tsp. Cayenne Pepper

Measure all ingredients into a jar, seal and shake well. Store in cool, dry place for up to 6 months. Seven teaspoons of mix equal a 1.25 oz. pkg. of purchased taco seasoning mix.

Christmas Coffee Mix in a Jar:

1/2 cup powdered non dairy creamer
1 cup mini chocolate chips
2 Tbsp vanilla powder
1/4 cup sifted powdered sugar
2 cups nonfat dry milk powder
2/3 cup instant coffee crystals

Gift tag instructions: Add 3 tablespoons of mix to hot water. Stir well and enjoy.

Resolve to be more green

It's that time of year again. That magical time when we resolve to do something perfectly, then we don't, so we throw up our hands and give up. I got so discouraged that I started resolving to never make New Year's Resolutions. It worked swimmingly.

It is easier to resolve to be greener, if you are specific about what you will do. Here are some suggestions:

Become a weekday vegetarian (or resolve to go meatless two days a week to start with). Not that meat is bad or horrible (I rather love the stuff) but it does cost a lot (especially if it is produced in a sustainable way). Most inexpensive meat was raised in ways that are very bad for the environment (and the meat). To make this stick, get recipes and ideas for meatless meals (see the article on page one for some websites that would have those). Think: soups, meatless chili, burritos and wraps, casseroles (really), quiches, and other foods. This will also give you the chance to move outside your comfort zone and try new cuisines. If beans aren't your thing, you may find that trying your hand at Indian dishes like yellow split pea or red lentil curry would make them more appealing. And remember, there are meals that are favorites that are or can be vegetarian: pizza does not need meat. Nor does pasta or lasagna.

Resolve to cut 10% from your expenditures. Now, some of us really have cut to the bone and have no more wiggle room, so if you're in that boat, don't beat yourself up. But if you're not sure, take a look at what you spend your money on, and see what you could do without. Do you need cable? Do you drive a lot (or drive solo when you don't have to)? Do you buy a lot of things that you could borrow or get used? Maybe you find you cut out one or two big expenditures and you don't miss them (much). Or maybe you find ways to cut each expenditure a little bit—by rescheduling recurring appointments a bit farther apart than before, by using less, or by sharing. See if you can do it.

Resolve to eat more locally, or at least seasonally. Granted, this might negate the “cut 10% from your expenditures” resolution, but it may well be worth it. If you can afford to join a CSA like Langwater Farm, you will get fresh, organic vegetables (and vegetables you didn't know existed, like watermelon radish). You can freeze or can what you do not use and save it for later. The money you spend on this, while perhaps more than the money you'd spend at a large chain grocery store, will stay in the local community, the food is delicious, and it's much better for you. It's also hard to justify going out to eat when you've got just-picked spinach and beets and romanesca in the fridge.

Resolve to spend more time outside. Yes, the weather is often awful here in New England, and no, I'm not saying you should expose yourself to the hazards of a blizzard. But don't be afraid to go outside for a walk. Look at the world around you, get exposed to some sun and fresh air, and take note of how beautiful it is outside, even when it's cold and the trees are bare. It's a challenge to stay motivated to be green when you don't see or spend much time in the natural world.

Resolve to use fewer resources. Switch to compact fluorescents. If you use a printer, print in Century Gothic, the most frugal (and less ink consumptive) of the fonts. (You can also go to printer properties and have the document print as a draft, which will save even more ink.) If you are at work and will be away for the lunch hour, shut your computer down and turn the lights off in your office. If you have paper that was printed on one side (that isn't confidential) reuse it as scrap paper for jotting down notes before recycling it. If you can, carpool, bike or walk, or take public transportation to work. In fact, if you can, try to share rides wherever you go—if someone you know is going to the same event you are, it's silly for the both of you to each use a car.

Comments? Questions? Suggestions? Environmental angst? Or would you just like to write an article for the Green Page? Just send me an email at thestoughtongreenpage@gmail.com.