

Greening Your Simcha

Some of the following information comes from: *Temple Shalom in Newton MA*

Location of Event

Holding an event at your temple and/or arranging an event at a nearby location (within your state of residence) significantly reduces energy expenditure for all types of travel.

- Consider car pooling
- Hire bus/van to transport persons

Electronic Invitations

- If you have the computer skills you have the option to send and receive your invitation electronically. Programs such as [Evite](#) can be used to reach your entire guest list. Using electronic invitations allows you to spend less money and lessens those that require paper invitations (some may not use email or have a computer)
- Consider scanning those beautiful invitations/announcements and sending them electronically. (Again, reducing printing and mailings)
- Consider electronic thank you notes
- If paper invitations are a must, consider recycled paper, processed without chlorine and dyes (twistedlimbpaperworks)
 - Option: includes wildflower seeds to be planted with paper

Paper Reduction: Be aware of how many different pieces of paper you are using.

Try this:

- Maps printed on reverse side
- Omit tissue paper
- Use front & back of invitation for information
- Response cards instead of separate envelopes and cards or response card that folds over and becomes a self-mailer

Clothing

- Consider environmentally friendly materials, recycled materials
- Consider renting attire instead of purchasing
- Consider consignment shops
- The [Fairy Godmother Project](#) , [Northshore Fairy Godmother Project](#), www.princessproject.org , IDO Foundation. These organizations collect new and gently worn formal wear and accessories and donate them to teens in need, allowing them to attend their proms in style.
- Believe it or not, you can even purchase recycled kippot to offer your guests when they arrive for the ceremony.
[Fair Trade Judaica](#) can point you to some vendors, or you can do an internet search for recycled kippot. Also, consider donating your extra kippot after your event. Perhaps your synagogue can use them for Shabbat

Food: Consult with your caterer and ask how they can support your greening efforts

- Go organic & buy local

- Consider using foods that do not use pesticides and/or hormones

Fair Trade Coffee: Mirembekawomera: a cooperative of Jewish, Muslim and Christian farmers in Uganda that supply fair trade coffees/teas

Skip Course Listings: Consider omitting list of food courses at each place setting to save on paper

Choose Reusable Table Settings

- Consider using plates, utensils, cups, serving pieces, napkins, tableclothes, etc. that can be washed and reused.
- When possible, recycle any plastic items. Durable china is always preferable to paper goods because it avoids repeated costs of production and disposal. Less gets shipped and thrown away when using china. Washing the china uses fewer resources than creating new paper goods.

Serving utensils are not yet earth-friendly because they are still made of plastic. Nevertheless, it is possible to find some brands that are made from a percentage of recycled post-consumer plastics. In addition, trays, covers and serving utensils can be sterilized and re-used which is more earth-friendly than recycling or just throwing them away.

Compostable Table Settings

- Consider purchasing compostable picnic supplies/table settings- plates made from sugarcane, and glasses and cutlery made from corn. ([World Centric](#) and [Eco Products](#)). Consider shipping costs (environmental and financial). The products themselves are considerably less expensive than the usual paper and plastic ware.

Reduce Disposables

- Review all of the disposable products you plan to use. Are there places where napkins are enough (rather than little plates and napkins)? Places where you can put out serving tongs rather than individual toothpicks? (food safety regulations will govern some of this, but your caterer should be able to provide some guidance)
- Other places where you can eliminate extra disposables? If disposables are called for, there are more "earth- friendly" goods than traditional paper. Plates made from sugar fiber waste, compostable cups made from corn, and flatware made from corn and potatoes are options.
- Congregants can ask their caterers for these products or look for them at [World Centric](#), a non-profit in California.
- Bamboo plates are a good option if you want something more substantial and dressy; though single use, they are made from a renewable resource and can be composed because they biodegrade fairly quickly. [Bambu Home](#) is a possible source.

Donate Leftovers

- Make plans in advance to donate leftover food to a shelter, soup kitchen or food pantry. Find out ahead of time what that organization's policy is regarding accepting prepared (as opposed to nonperishable) food and be sure that the caterer and/or serving staff knows to wrap up and refrigerate leftover food quickly so that others can safely eat it. In order to ensure that the leftover food is either picked up or delivered in a timely manner, you could appoint a reliable friend or relative as your "food donation captain."
- Will need to check Maryland law regarding donating leftovers that have not been touched

- Consider having caterer pack up leftovers to take home and share with relatives & friends

Centerpieces

- Consider fresh fruit centerpieces
- Consider potted plants
- Recycle cut flowers to hospitals, the synagogue, nursing homes
- Consider using recycled paper for artwork
- Baskets filled with items that will be donated to shelters
- Sports equipment arranged in a centerpiece that is then donated to local school

Favors

- Skip them
- Announce in lieu of favors, that a donation will be made to an organization/charity of choice in honor of _____
- Provide something that is eatable

Confetti

- Substitute with birdseed, wrapped & reusable candies, flower petals

Party leftover stuff

- **Birthday Wishes.org** accepts donations for homeless children's birthday parties

Resource Sites for Greening your Simchas

- <http://greensimchaguide.org/>
- http://www.jufj.org/green_just_celebrations