

# 30 WAYS to GREEN YOUR PLATE

YOU DON'T HAVE TO OVERHAUL YOUR LIFE (OR EVEN YOUR KITCHEN) TO HELP SAVE THE PLANET. THESE SMALL STEPS CAN MAKE A HUGE IMPACT ON YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT—AND YOUR HEALTH.



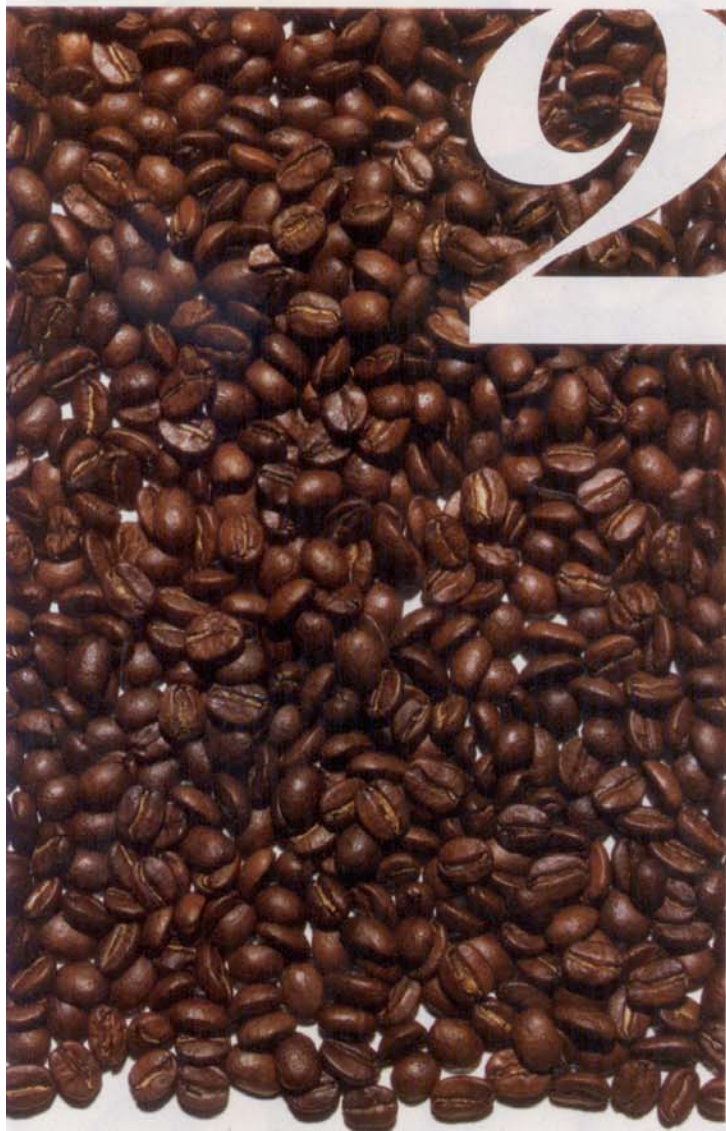
by **KIMBERLY A. DALY**  
photography by **TOM SCHIERLITZ**

►► You're already pretty eco-conscious (hello, reusable water bottle and energy-saving lightbulbs!). But you can do even more good by focusing on what and how you're eating and by incorporating a few easy tweaks into your daily diet. It's not hard to be a greener foodie; in fact, you don't have to give up any of your favorite fare. Just become more aware of how your groceries affect the earth and start making smarter choices. To help, we've come up with 30 ideas you can try this month—and all year long.



**1**  
**MAKE PRODUCE  
A-PEELING**

You'll not only be getting more vitamins and minerals from those unpeeled cucumbers, potatoes, and apples—you'll also be tossing less into the trash bin. Plus, researchers from Cornell University found that most of an apple's cancer-fighting antioxidants are in the peel. Just be sure to wash produce thoroughly first.



## BREW A BETTER CUP OF JOE

►► If you buy your coffee beans at the local supermarket, chances are they were grown in a foreign locale where farming isn't regulated. That means manufacturers can use chemical fertilizers and pesticides as well as slash-and-burn farming techniques (i.e., clearing forest areas to create open fields)—all of which have a big impact on the environment. In fact, a study in *EarthTrends* found that those practices have caused soil erosion and water pollution issues and reduced bird populations in places like Mexico and Colombia.

When buying coffee, look for labels like "USDA Organic," "Rainforest Alliance," or "Bird Friendly" (which is stamped on bags of beans that have been grown under the canopy of the trees where songbirds and other animals make their homes). "You probably won't notice a difference in taste," says Larry Larson, the founder of Larry's Beans in Raleigh, NC. "But these coffees are better for the planet." More ways to green your beans: Use recycled-paper or permanent metal coffee filters at home, and sip from a thermos or reusable travel mug on the go.

### 3/ BE LABEL-SAVVY

►► Not sure whether to buy the natural or organic peanut butter? "'Natural' is a meaningless term," says Kate Geagan, R.D., a nutritionist and the author of *Go Green Get Lean*. Shop for foods with the "USDA Organic" seal, which means they contain ingredients produced without the use of synthetic fertilizers, chemical pesticides, growth stimulators, or radiation.

### 4/ GO WILD FOR ALASKAN SALMON

►► "Like other seafood varieties, this one is loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, but it doesn't have the potential toxin risk farmed salmon can have," says Geagan. Those fish are raised in netted pens, commonly fed an artificial diet, and treated with antibiotics. Since wild Alaskan salmon feeds in relatively unpolluted waters, the risk of mercury contamination is lower.

It's also sustainably harvested, which means it's not overfished the way some varieties of tuna and sea bass have been. In fact, a report from the United Nations warns that our oceans could be depleted of fish by 2050 if we continue to catch and consume them the way we have been. Other healthy options, like sardines, pink shrimp from Oregon and

Maine, rainbow trout, and black cod, are also in no danger of being overfished. Choose these first, or download a *Seafood Watch* Android or iPhone app for additional tasty choices.

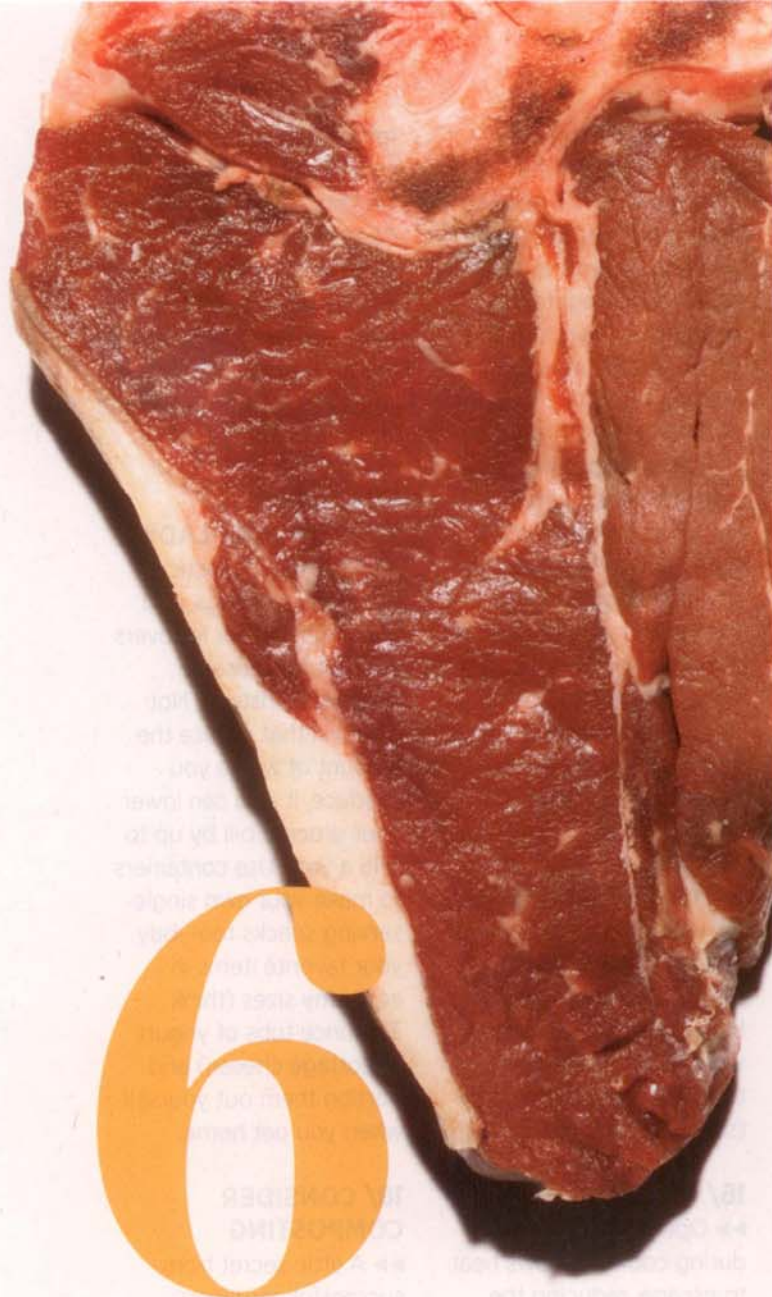
### 5/ OPT FOR ORGANIC MILK

►► At conventional dairies, cows are often given synthetic growth factors, like recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) or bovine somatotropin (bST), to increase milk production. But those hormones can up the levels of insulin-like growth factors in the milk, and because your body can't tell the difference between them and its own, health experts worry they could have a negative effect.

One study in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* linked elevated levels of these insulin growth factors from dairy consumption to breast, colorectal, and other cancers. "That's why their use has been banned in Australia, Canada, Japan, and the European Union," says Geagan.

To play it safe, buy certified organic milk. Or pour soy milk on your cereal: It's hormone-free and creates 50 percent less greenhouse gas during its production than regular moo juice does, according to researchers in Sweden and Seattle.

►► SOY MILK CREATES 50% LESS GREENHOUSE GAS DURING ITS PRODUCTION THAN REGULAR MILK.



# 6

## GRAZE ON GRASS-FED BEEF

►► The cut of meat isn't the only thing affecting your health; where it came from plays a role too. "Cows that feed on pasture grasses have a much smaller carbon footprint than conventional cattle do," says Karen Christensen, the co-owner of Mack Brook Farm in Argyle, NY. "Those cows are fed grain and corn produced in separate fields, which requires gas-guzzling farm equipment and chemicals. On farms like ours, the animals roam around and eat grass."

The nutritional payoff is huge as well: Research shows grass-fed beef contains two to three times more heart-healthy omega-3s and four times more vitamin E than corn-fed beef. "And it's lower in total calories and saturated fat because it's leaner," adds Geagan. Look for "grass-fed" labels on meat in your grocery store.

## THANK THE PLANET

This Turkey Day, celebrate Mother Earth by putting these planet-friendly tips into play.

### 7/ TAKE STOCK

►► The more meals you can create from one animal, the lighter your environmental impact. So don't toss that turkey carcass, says Annemarie Colbin, Ph.D., the founder of the Natural Gourmet Institute in New York City. Instead, put it into a stockpot, cover it with 4 inches of water, and add an onion, carrots, celery, garlic, dried herbs, and a few tablespoons of white vinegar to draw the calcium out of the bones. "Simmer the whole thing for six to eight hours, strain, and you'll have a fabulous stock that can be used to make soup, stew, and rice," says Colbin.

### 8/ PORTION IT OUT

►► If you tend to cook enough to feed a small army, stop overestimating your troops' appetite. Here's how much you'll really need per person of some typical holiday dishes, according to Robert Lilienfeld, editor of *The Use Less Stuff Report*: 1 pound of turkey, 3 tablespoons of cranberry relish, and half a cup of eggnog.

### 9/ FREEZE YOUR ASSETS

►► Toasting nuts kicks up their flavor—but it also (at an oven temp of 350°F for

30 minutes or so, including preheating time) uses 1 kilowatt hour of energy, about what it takes to do three loads of laundry. Cut down on your power consumption by cooking as many nuts as you can fit on your baking sheet in a single layer, then freezing the leftovers, says Maureen Ternus, R.D., the executive director of the International Tree Nut Council. They'll keep for up to six months in an airtight container.

### 10/ STEP UP TO THE PLATE

►► Did you invite more guests than you have dishes for? Opt for single-use bamboo plates. Unlike paper versions, they fully biodegrade four to six months after disposal. Plus, bamboo grows up to 4 feet per day, while trees can take 24 years to reach maturity.

### 11/ GET THE SCOOP

►► Whether you're planning to put a wild rice salad or dried fruit and nut stuffing on your holiday table, buying some of the ingredients from the bulk bins means less packaging, says Allison Enke, Whole Foods Market's registered dietitian. She also advises bringing your own bags.