



TRANSITIONING TO AN eco-friendly lifestyle used to mean upheaval and inconvenience. Not anymore. With the proliferation of zero-packaging stores, smart strategies for energy-efficient homes, fashion designers with a sustainability-first ethos and low-impact options for everything from your dental floss to your toilet brush, going green has never been easier. That's not to say it will be stress-free, of course. Luckily, there's a zero-waste cocktail for that, too (see page 56).

WHERE TO FIND PLANET- FRIENDLY EVERYTHING

An anxious
urbanite's guide to
lower-impact living



By REBECCA FLEMING, JEAN GRANT, MALCOLM JOHNSTON,
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Photography by DANIEL EHRENWORTH

THE ZERO HEROES

Torontonians who've rejected plastics, packaging and other landfill fodder in pursuit of a low-impact lifestyle



The Sustainability Sisters

Toni Sapping, 30, a family doctor, and Lin Sapping, 28, a model

NEIGHBOURHOOD: Danforth

ZERO-WASTERS SINCE: March 2018

MONTHLY WASTE: One small grocery bag

Why you decided to try to go zero-waste:

Lin: We watched the documentary *A Plastic Ocean*. I got an hour in and started bawling my eyes out. I still haven't finished it! I decided that day: no more plastic.

Toni: The plan was to go plastic-free for 30 days, but when that was over, we knew we couldn't go back.

Items that are banned in your home:

Lin: Plastic water bottles and those stupid red party cups. We host a lot, and everyone gets a proper glass or mug.

Items you own a lot of:

Toni: Jars. And oils that we use for conditioner, lip balm, cooking—literally everything.

Items you always carry with you:

Toni: My travel mug, cutlery and my Onyx food container. If I'm feeling really bougie, I'll carry beeswax wrap.

Guilty pleasure you can't give up:

Lin: Potato chips. I'll eat a whole bag in one sitting.

Waste-free product or service that you wish was available in Toronto:

Toni: Food delivery and takeout in non-plastic containers.

Your most ingenious zero-waste life hack:

Lin: We stole most of our best ideas, including our recipe for Vim: castile



soap, eco-friendly bleach, baking soda and lemon oil. It works on everything.

Omnivore, vegetarian, vegan or other:

Toni: We call ourselves planetarians. It means eating in a way that's sustainable for the planet. I don't eat meat or fish, but I don't freak out if my soup is made with chicken stock.

Where you buy groceries:

Lin: Summer is easy because there are so many farmers' markets.

Toni: In the winter, Karma Co-op, Urban Bulk, Refill and Bare Market.

Where you buy clothes:

Lin: As a model, I used to buy so many clothes from fast-fashion brands for auditions and shoots. I don't anymore, unless I absolutely have to. I recently had a photo shoot where I needed

skinny jeans, and I couldn't find them in a thrift store. I bought a pair from Zara, went to the shoot and then returned them.

Where you buy toiletries:

Lin: We use baking soda to brush our teeth. We use all-metal safety razors. It took me a while to find waste-free mascara, and to this day, I've only found one brand in Canada that has recyclable packaging, called Elate. It's not perfect, but it's better.

On a scale of one to Greta Thunberg, give yourself a sustainability score:

Toni: Seven. We have a ways to go, but we're trying. In December, we're taking a freighter across the ocean to visit family instead of flying. It's an eight-to-10-day journey each way, depending on weather.



The Diaper Warriors

Ryan Dymont, 39, finance director at EcoSchools Canada, Emily Hunter, 35, an event planner, and Phoenix, nine months

NEIGHBOURHOOD: Beaches

ZERO-WASTERS SINCE: January 2015

MONTHLY WASTE: One small grocery bag

The easiest part of pursuing a zero-waste lifestyle:

The baby. He seems perfectly happy to use reusable products.

Items that are banned in your home:

Disposable diapers, squeezable snacks and new toys.

Items you own a lot of:

Reusable diapers and baby wipes.

Items you always carry with you:

Reusable zippered bag for dirty diapers and containers for baby food and milk.

Waste-free product or service that you wish was available in Toronto:

Medical products for babies, such as



skin creams and different oils and medicines. For now, we try to find packaging that can be recycled.

Sustainable habit you're proudest of:

Diapers are the biggest waste item for babies by far, and that's what we prioritized from day one. The City of Toronto permits diapers in the compost bin, but only the fibre and organic matter are composted. The plastic ends up in the landfill. If parents switched to one or two reusable diapers per day, it would make a huge difference.

Your most ingenious zero-waste life hack:

We started a workshop called Diaper Dad to educate parents on the impact of baby waste and how to raise a zero-waste child. Beyond diapers, a bidet attachment for your toilet or shower makes the cleaning process easy and quick.

Omnivore, vegetarian, vegan or other:

We're vegetarian.

Where you buy groceries:

Bulk stores and local grocery stores. In the warmer months, we go to the Leslieville Farmers' Market or the Evergreen Brick Works, where we can be almost exclusively zero waste.

What you use for cleaning:

Vinegar is our all-purpose cleaner. We also use dishwasher pods from Seventh Generation and washing machine strips from Tru Earth, which has compostable packaging.

On a scale of one to Greta Thunberg, give yourself a sustainability score:

No more than a seven. There's a lot of room to improve.





The Queen of Green

Meera Jain, 35, an elementary school teacher.

NEIGHBOURHOOD: North York

ZERO-WASTER SINCE: March 2018

MONTHLY WASTE: Roughly half a grocery bag

Your inspiration to pursue a zero-waste lifestyle:

I've always been environmentally conscious. A couple of years ago, friends from Australia visited me, taught me all about zero waste and encouraged me to watch the *A Plastic Ocean*. After that, there was no turning back.

The hardest part of going zero waste:

Inconvenience. Groceries, getting a coffee and clothing my two kids take a little more effort, but it's all worth it.

Items that are banned from your home:

We avoid disposable coffee cups, plastic produce bags and black plastic.

Items you own a lot of:

Reusable produce bags, glass jars and second-hand toys—please don't ask me how many. Pretty much everything we buy for our children is gently used.

Items you always carry with you:

Reusable bag, travel fork, travel mug.

Guilty pleasure you can't give up:

Minty gum! No one wants their teacher to have coffee breath. I tried some biodegradable ones with limited success.

Sustainable habit you're proudest of:

Transitioning our family to a plant-based diet. I was raised vegetarian and have been vegan for almost a year. My husband and children are vegetarian.

Your most ingenious zero-waste life hack:

Homemade deodorant. I use coconut oil, baking soda, arrowroot starch and essential oils. I buy all the ingredients in bulk, and it actually works!

Where you buy groceries:

I buy perishables at a regular chain grocery store. For dried goods, I go to Bulk Barn and use my own containers. I store bread in a reusable and washable linen bag, and to keep it airtight I wrap that in a plastic bag I reuse. I cut up carrots and celery and put them in water in the fridge. I eventually use that water for my plants.

Where you buy toiletries:

I buy all my toiletries in bulk from Bare Market, Eco and Amour, and Green and

Frugal. They're all stored in glass jars I bring with me. I also make my own toiletries from raw ingredients.

Where you buy clothes:

I buy second-hand clothes, almost exclusively. For the kids, we love Once Upon a Child and a cute consignment store called Extogger. We also favour sustainable clothing companies when possible.

On a scale of one to Greta Thunberg, give yourself a sustainability score:

Six and a half. We have made some great gains that I'm very proud of, but I'm very aware that we have a lot of work to do. Every day we strive to be a little better than the last.



Bad thing out, good thing in

The best way to save the planet is to consume less stuff, and to buy used when you can't. If you absolutely must buy new, here are some environmentally responsible, aesthetically pleasing ways to do it



COLOURED GLASS STRAWS

The best option is to forgo straws altogether, but if you're determined, this four-pack from Poketo makes for stylish, sustainable sipping. \$28. *Bergo Designs*, 28 Tank House Ln., bergodesigns.ca



COLLAPSIBLE COFFEE CUP

A silicone cup that comes with a heat sleeve, is dishwasher safe and fits easily in your purse. Plus, it'll save you a dime at Starbucks. \$25. *MEC*, 300 Queen St. W., mec.ca



WOOL DRYER BALLS

Canadian-wool dryer balls from Nurtured Sew reduce drying time by up to 50 per cent and minimize wrinkles—an eco win-win. \$10. *Pretty Clean Shop*, 3072 Dundas St. W., prettycleanshop.com



BEESWAX FOOD WRAP

These multipurpose food wraps come coated in sustainably harvested beeswax from independent apiarists. \$30. *Hanji Gifts*, 619 Bloor St. W., earthologywraps.com



SWEDISH SPONGE CLOTHS

These absorbent cloths, the long-held secret of Nordic neat freaks, soak up as much as 15 times their weight. These, by Ten & Co., look cute doing it. \$6. *Scout*, 405 Roncesvalles Ave., well.ca



SILK DENTAL FLOSS

For a next-level oral hygiene routine, this silk floss is as luxurious as it is eco-conscious (i.e., 100 per cent compostable). \$11. *Logan and Finley*, 670 Queen St. W., loganandfinley.com



SCENT-FREE DISH SOAP

This phosphate-free dish soap from Montreal's the Unscented Company is easy on lakes and rivers and tough on grime. The bottle is refillable. \$5. *Canadiantire.ca*



MAKEUP REMOVERS

These multipurpose cotton-flannel swabs have serged edges that prevent fraying, and they can be washed and reused indefinitely. \$14 for a set of 12. *Cheeksahoy.com*



BEECHWOOD TOILET BRUSH

Cleaning the loo may be icky, but it needn't be guilt-inducing, too. A plastic-free, zero-waste, biodegradable scrubber. \$39. *Sustain Eco Store*, 114 Main St. E., Huntsville, shop.sustainecostore.com



REUSABLE PADS

Absorbent, non-allergenic and machine washable, and they last for up to a decade. Plus, for every one of these Canadian-made pads purchased, the company will plant a tree. \$210. Treehuggerclothpads.com



SCOURING SPONGE

Vicious on dirty dishes and countertops but kind to the planet, this plant-based scouring pad by the B Corp-certified Full Circle gets its grit from pulverized walnut shells. \$6.50. *Saponetti*, 615C Brock Ave.



BAMBOO CUTLERY

A reusable bamboo cutlery set by Kingston-based company Boho and Hobo comes in a washable case so you can pop it in your bag after lunch. \$15. *Unboxed Market*, 1263 Dundas St. W.

GOOD STOREYS

Gorgeous new builds with an eco-minded ethos

An extra-thick layer of insulation was applied to the outside of the plywood, instead of between the studs—like wrapping the house in a sweater. The builders also applied extra tape and sealant for maximum efficiency. The owners were able to cut their energy bills by 30 per cent

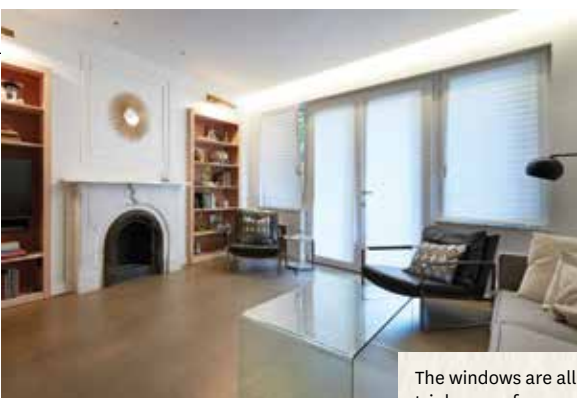
The north façade is covered in unstained cedar shingles, which are compostable when they reach the end of their life

The north and south ends of the home are connected to separate thermostats, to account for the natural sunlight to the south. On sunny winter days, the Races rarely turn the heating on

In the summer, a skylight at the top of a central staircase opens via remote control and draws hot air up and out of the house, a technique called the stack effect. The family cracks a window on the main floor to bring in cool air

➤ A Sustainable Sanctuary in Leslieville

Architect Craig Race's first Leslieville house, which he bought and renovated in 2013, was on a double-wide lot and only took up half the property. A few years later, when his wife, Courtney, was pregnant with their first child, he severed the lot and sold his existing house so he could build their dream home from scratch. Much of Race's work takes advantage of forgotten urban spaces like laneways, and he wanted his house to be able to serve as a showcase for his latest green design ideas. The project wrapped up at the end of 2017. Race loves that his energy bills are low and that his house is toasty in winter, cool in summer. It looks pretty good, too.



The windows are all triple-pane for maximum efficiency



The rear exterior is clad in galvalume, a durable, recyclable material

Giant panes of south-facing glass let in dappled sunlight filtered through a deciduous tree at the rear of the house



Because they were moving in with a newborn, the Races were sensitive about air quality. All paints were zero-VOC, and they used a special stain on all the wood that absorbs formaldehyde and other construction gases



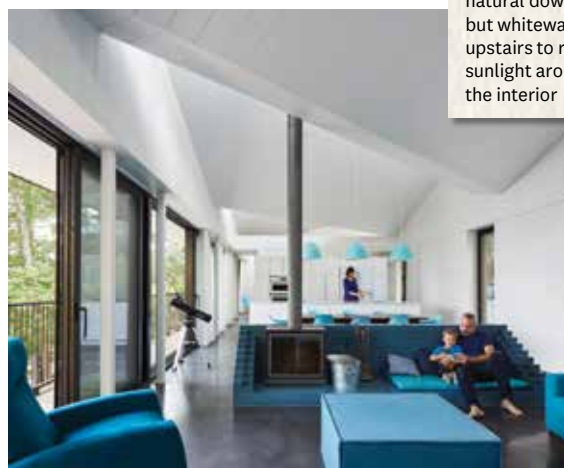
The sawtooth roof means solar panels can be oriented south and skylights north. The skylights open for increased airflow. All power to the cottage is electric for seamless integration with the solar panels. An efficient wood-burning stove provides extra warmth in winter



A Lakeside Eco-Retreat

When Jon and Gillian Kirkwood, a biotech consultant and a finance exec who live near Yonge and Eglinton, purchased their Upper Stoney Lake property in 2015, they envisioned building a cottage that blended effortlessly into the natural landscape. "I grew up camping on Georgian Bay and developed a strong appreciation of nature," says Jon. They hired architects and designers Coryn Kempster and Julia Jamrozik, who came up with two stacked boxes, the upper a living space, the lower for sleeping, both nestled against the rock shield. The cottage is comfortable when it's just the couple and their 11-year-old daughter but can also easily host up to 20 guests for large family reunions.

The concrete floors are stained black upstairs to attract the sun. The plywood walls are natural downstairs but whitewashed upstairs to reflect sunlight around the interior



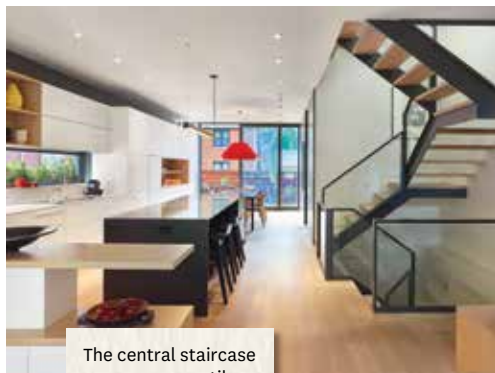
By bridging the two structures with open space underneath, rainfall flows freely to the lake. A shaded walkway in front of the main windows blocks the high sun in the summer and lets the lower light in in winter





A Natural Oasis in Midtown

When Ian Roland and Linda Rothstein, both lawyers, became empty-nesters six years ago, they decided to ditch their spacious six-bedroom Toronto home in favour of something more energy efficient. They enlisted architect Heather Dubbeldam and found a small 1920s detached ripe for a tear-down just a few blocks from their old home. They kept the construction process as green as possible by retaining the two side walls and rebuilding the home from the top down rather than the bottom up.



The central staircase serves as a ventilation shaft from the basement to the third floor, with a skylight at the top that opens in the summer to vent warm air. The open stair design and transparent guards allow natural light to stream all the way to the basement. Inside, the floors are crafted from white oak.

The decks and porches are all made from a thermally treated ash, an alternative to pressure-treated lumber that uses heat to draw out moisture so the wood lasts longer.



Large panes of glass are sheltered by deciduous trees, which let the sun in in the winter and block most of it in warmer months.



HOW TO GREENIFY YOUR HOME, DIY STYLE

Not everyone can tear down their creaky, leaky old house and start from scratch. Christine Lolley, the principal and co-founder of Solares Architecture, a green home and sustainable building firm based in Toronto, says it's possible to get greener without breaking the bank. Here's how:

PLUG THE LEAKS

Hire an energy auditor to assess your home's efficiency. If it's leaking hot air, no amount of insulation will matter. "It's like wearing a down jacket without zipping it up," says Lolley. She recommends Toronto companies GreenSaver and CoEfficient.

ATTACK THE ATTIC

Next, check your attic. A lot of attics in Toronto, especially in older homes, have no insulation whatsoever. "Your mom always said, 'Put your hat on.' The same principle applies here," says Lolley. Adding insulation can make a huge difference. If you're not up for a DIY job, she recommends Great Northern Insulation.

SURFACE MEANING

Everyone wants stone countertops, but not all surfaces are created equal. "I always recommend quartz as a planet-friendlier alternative to marble. It's manufactured from chips, so you're using waste material rather than taking a huge slab out of the earth's core."

SWITCH OVER

Switching over to LED lighting is a great way to reduce your energy consumption and hydro bill, and it's a lot less expensive than it used to be. "LED bulbs are kind of bright and harsh and most don't work with dimmers," says Lolley. "I love that gorgeous hue you get with halogen bulbs that you can dim down to a sunset orange." For fellow light snobs, Lolley recommends a Richmond Hill company called Liteline, which makes LED pot lights (\$80 per light, cheaper in bulk) that create that perfect golden glow.

PANE MANAGEMENT

Most people want as much natural light as possible, but leaky windows force your heating and cooling systems to work overtime. If replacing windows is an option, look for ones with low emissivity, which let in the light but not the heat. She recommends Inline Fiberglass and Fibertec.

THE MIRACULOUS LOW-WASTE CONDO

How one determined super converted his building from eight dumpsters of garbage a week to just one a month



For more than 20 years, Princely Soundranayagam has been superintendent of the Mayfair on the Green III condo in Malvern. Since 2008, thanks to his recycling and reuse programs, he's managed to cut the building's waste by 88 per cent. He's not stopping there.

How did your waste-reduction efforts begin?

Twelve years ago, our building's reserve fund was getting low, and management wanted to increase maintenance fees to compensate. We used to fill eight dumpsters each week, which cost a lot of money. We asked residents to recycle, but they were lazy about it. They would

throw out cardboard boxes, bottles, clothes and more. So I went to each door and explained to everyone that because we were spending so much on garbage collection, fees were going up. Residents asked how they could prevent it. We handed out clear plastic bags and asked residents to collect their recyclables and bring them down to the basement. We converted our garbage bins to recycling bins and turned our garbage chute into an organics chute.

Were the residents receptive?

Yes. They didn't mind taking their garbage and recycling down in the elevator. The elevators don't get smelly because it's the organics that smell, and

those go down the chute. We had some challenges with seniors and sick people. We told them that if they're unable to bring the recycling down on a particular day, they could put it outside and call me—my staff and I would pick it up.

Have you introduced any other waste-management innovations?

We supply glass jars so residents can collect used cooking oil, which we store in a drum in the basement. It gets picked up by a company called Green Oil, who pay us and then resell the cooking oil to recyclers to be processed as biodiesel products. We have a library in the basement with books and furniture donated by residents—stuff they were going to throw away. We also collect medicine and other hazardous waste. Last Friday, I collected 18 cans of paint and 12 pounds of pills and tablets. Every two or three weeks, the city sends a truck for hazardous waste pickup, stuff like batteries, chemicals, medicine and fluorescent tubes. From eight dumpsters a week, we're down to just one a month. We also send out 10 recycling bins and two green bins each week. People are very co-operative here.

You've developed a reputation as an environmental enforcer—so I guess they kind of have to be.

It can be hard with new residents. We tell them our rules when they register. For the first infraction, they get a warning; for the second, the building owner is informed; for the third infraction, they pay \$50; and for the fourth, \$100—but it's never gotten that far. People get the message once they have to pay.

You've been so successful. Why haven't more condos adopted your methods?

Some are trying. But they just ask their residents to bring their garbage down; they don't apply a financial penalty. Not everyone understands the impact of their actions, so a financial incentive is very important. For our building, it has worked very well. We have almost \$3 million in our reserve fund now.

INCREDIBLE BULK

Four stunning shops selling packaging-free groceries, beauty products and cleaning supplies in all their naked beauty



Eco and Amour

In a Scarborough industrial park, Sarah Marcus and Laura Craig crank out refillable home and personal care products under their Eco and Amour label and stock luxe green home and beauty brands like Lines of Elan, the Bare Home and the Sudsatorium. They've also placed kiosks of refills in Pollocks Home Hardware on Roncesy and Shea Organics in Collingwood, with more partner retailers coming this year. 30 Bertrand Ave., 647-948-9084, ecoandamour.com



Solid dish soap scented with grapefruit and orange essential oils. \$18

Lavender-scented pet wash. \$0.84/oz



Jocelyn's Soil Booster Worm Manure, made with food waste from Ontario businesses. \$20

Their bulk oils and vinegars are top sellers



Honey on tap from Ontario beekeeper Graeme Foers. \$14.59 per pound



Organic mesh cotton produce bags. \$6.99 per bag



Unboxed

Michelle Gentner and Luis Martins owned a College Street brewpub. When they closed it in 2018, they focused on their next project: Unboxed Market, a BYO jars, bags or beeswax wraps grocery store full of seasonal produce, specialty grains and flours, and Ontario-raised meat from the butcher counter (especially the house-made Portuguese chouriço). In the basement industrial kitchen, chefs prep daily meals and catering trays using ingredients from the upstairs market. 1263 Dundas St. W., 416-533-9017, unboxedmarket.com



Moo Free Blue Lavender Majik almond milk. \$6 for 473mL



The Green Jar

Sisters Mara and Tannis Bundi grew up in a minimal-waste household on a 50-acre horse farm in Stouffville. As adults in Toronto, they found it both time-consuming and frustrating to maintain that lifestyle. Their solution was to open the Green Jar in midtown, a hub for zero-wasters packed with refillable personal care and household products, and gizmos like a reverse osmosis water station and bamboo teething rings for baby ecowarriors. 1061 St. Clair Ave. W., 416-652-6991, thegreenjarshop.com

Routine activated charcoal natural deodorant. It works, even on Tannis's preteen boy. \$32 for 100g



Meow Meow Tweet Coconut Cacao Vegan Lip Balm in a compostable paper tube. \$21 for 28g



Pretty Clean Shop

Miriam Juarez's Pretty Clean Shop in the Junction sells refillable body, hair, skin, beauty and home care products, including creamy Elate lipsticks, makeup encased in compostable bamboo, and turmeric and calendula-infused shampoo and conditioner bars by Unwrapped Life. 3072 Dundas St. W., 416-766-9633, prettycleanshop.com

Tru Earth Eco-strips laundry detergent. \$14.95 for 32 loads



Soy-based, acetone-free refillable nail polish remover. \$7



Cheeks Ahoy facial rounds (to replace disposable cotton makeup pads). \$14 for 12



THE LOW-WASTE COCKTAIL BAR



Tucked away behind the glum concierge desk of an austere building on Bay Street near Adelaide is Supernova Ballroom. Once home to an off-track betting bar, the cathedral-like space is now a gorgeous, disco-inspired cocktail lounge with an anti-waste ethos. The owners, champion bartenders Kelsey Ramage and Iain Griffiths, use local products and ingredients that would have otherwise been rubbish—oleo syrup made with leftover lemon rinds, bee pollen from Rosewood Estates' low-intervention apiary and wine made from organic Niagara peaches—making their boozy concoctions both delectable and guilt-free.



A SUSTAINABLE SIPPER

Winter brings with it a dearth of fresh, local produce, so Ramage infuses her gin with kombu and sustainably sourced seaweed from Forbes Wild Foods, which imparts an umami flavour without tasting like seawater. That's the basis of Supernova's **Little Thief G&T**. Ramage adds white peach and chrysanthemum bitters for a slightly savoury take on the classic cocktail.

Other eco ingredients

REUSED COFFEE GROUNDS

Boxcar Social, the coffee shop around the corner, gives Supernova their spent grounds, which Ramage is using to experiment with a coffee liqueur for an espresso martini-style drink.

MUSKMELON

You can't get Midori in Ontario, but you can get locally grown muskmelons in season. So Ramage and her team make melon liqueur to create their take on a Midori sour.

FORAGED FOODS

"Forbes Wild Foods has an insane amount of weird and wonderful things," says Ramage, of the Toronto-based foraging company. A few interesting ingredients Supernova

sources: spruce tips, seaweed, Labrador tea (it's a plant that tastes like blueberries) and wild mushrooms. "They specialize in mushrooms and seaweed, but we lean toward the seaweed side of things just because it's a lot more approachable than having a mushroom martini," says Ramage.

RED PLUMS

Red plums have carried Supernova through the winter season. At the end of September, they used a big haul of the fruit to make plum syrup, a vodka-based plum liqueur and—out of the leftover pulp—garnishes. Nothing was wasted but the pits.

ORANGES

Supernova uses orange rinds for guests who order off-menu old fashioned or negronis and uses the juice for fizzy orange soda.



Planet-Friendly Fashion

Twelve stylish, sustainably sourced items



CARGO COAT

Uncle Studios' slouchy, oversize cargo coat is made with lyocell, a hypoallergenic and extremely absorbent rayon fibre derived from sustainably sourced wood pulp cellulose. \$295. Unclexstudios.com



PURSE

The chic Crossbody Bag with gold hardware and croc-effect finish is a highlight of Ela's relaunched collection, now made with solvent-based polyurethane instead of leather. \$98. Hudson's Bay, Holt Renfrew, elahandbags.com



SKINNY JEANS

Triarchy's organic and recycled cotton high-waist skinny jeans are made in an L.A. facility that uses 98 per cent less water than traditional denim laundries. \$223. Triarchy.com



KIDSWEAR

Nudnik's the Disruptor tees for kids are made from unused, offcut, landfill-bound organic cotton. Each size (1 to 6) comes in a different colourway, and all are gender neutral. \$25. Nudniklife.com



RAIN BOOTS

Alice and Whittles' boots are made from the sap of rubber trees in sustainable Sri Lankan forests. Plastic-free, waterproof and made with 80 per cent less energy than conventional boots. \$160. Aliceandwhittles.com



BACKPACK

Discarded leather seats from Air Canada's Boeing 777 aircraft provide the source material for Mariclaro's sleek but roomy Satellite backpack, which includes a laptop slot and two accessory pockets. \$269. Mariclaro.ca



YOGA PANTS

Every pair of boldly printed Inner Fire yoga pants is made in Vancouver using BPA-free recycled water bottles that are crushed down and spun into a soft yarn. \$94. Myinnerfire.com



MESSENGER BAG

Brave Soles' messenger bag is made with castoff leather from furniture makers and features inside pockets made from the inner tubes of upcycled tires salvaged from dumps in the Dominican Republic. \$291. Bravesoles.ca



BATHING SUIT

Simple and sexy Minnow bathing suits are handmade to order in a Parkdale studio using chlorine-resistant and UV-blocking fabrics produced from 78 per cent recycled plastics. \$180. Variousretailers, minnowbathers.com



WIDE-LEG JEANS

Tired jeans destined for the landfill are shredded, and the salvaged fibres are respun into new material for Frank and Oak's Circular denim. The Nina wide-leg is high-waisted and cropped at the perfect length. \$89.50. Frankandoak.com



DRESS SHOES

Poppy Barley partners with family-owned shoe factories in Mexico and Brazil that offer workers a fair living wage and full-time permanent employment with benefits. These classic brogues go for \$398. Poppybarley.com



PARKA

PrimaLoft Gold synthetic fibre makes Wuxly's Bay Street Parka more breathable and water-resistant than goose down, plus it's made with 55 per cent post-consumer content. \$795. Imperative, Sporting Life, wuxly.ca

I WENT GREEN. MAYBE A LITTLE TOO GREEN

Here's what happens when you foist extreme eco-consciousness on your unsuspecting family **BY SOPHI ROBERTSON**



I'm a registered massage therapist by training, and I've always been the hippie in my group of friends—earthy, a little kooky—so maybe I was destined to lead a planet-conscious, zero-waste lifestyle. I don't know. What I do know is the moment it became a certainty: November 2016, when I read that one million coffee cups go to landfill each day in Toronto. I was floored. I wasn't naive enough to think I could save the planet on my own, but at least I could reduce my impact. Then and there, I decided to change my life wholesale: I'd cook everything from scratch, make my own beauty products and quit plastics entirely. My household of three would

go zero waste, or as close as we could get to it.

Mick, my husband, was in bed reading when I delivered the news. He's an even-keeled type of guy, an accountant by training who is now a craft beer salesman, and is in almost all regards unfazable. We'd always been responsible recyclers. We walked, cycled or took transit everywhere and focused on buying local and organic. So maybe he thought the transition would be painless. To that point, he was the primary chef at home and the main fetcher of groceries, so maybe he just figured I'd take over those tasks (which I eventually did). Or maybe he was just engrossed in his book. He smiled in

his supportive way and said, "Okay, ecowarrior."

Step one was to become accountable, so I started an Instagram page where I'd document what I was making, how much I was wasting and how it was all going. I wanted to use the power of social media to keep myself motivated. I figured I'd be able to learn from others, too. I brainstormed a few names and, before long, @yourecofriend was born.

The early days were exciting and intense. Using locally sourced, organic ingredients, I whipped up one-pot bone broths, sauces, stews, casseroles and soups. Mick was a devoted omnivore who loved the occasional steak; I wanted to move to a fully plant-based diet, so I introduced dishes like lemon basil vegan ricotta lasagna, red lentil coconut curry and tempeh tacos, and then ramped up their frequency. When we'd eat out, I'd bring containers for leftovers. We loved ordering delivery from a nearby Indian place, but the packaging, abundant to the point of absurdity, ruled that out. When we asked if we could bring our own containers, they occasionally accepted if they weren't too busy but usually said no. That was a tough one for Mick, but he adjusted.

After a lot of trial and error, I learned to make my own deodorant (shea butter, coconut oil, arrowroot flour and baking soda), body butter, household cleaners, laundry detergent and glue (water, flour, sugar and vinegar). As for shampoo, I decided to go "no 'poo"—that is, washing my hair with only water. In place of paper towels, we sliced up tired sheets and T-shirts; instead of plastic wrap for food, we used jars; instead of facial tissue, we cut up old flannel; instead of shaving cream, we used bar soap; and we all but eliminated new clothes by buying second-hand. For our daughter, Nyla, who's now six, I'll admit that we did use disposable diapers,

albeit the more eco-friendly brands, because I was in the depths of post-partum depression and couldn't handle the mental stress of washing cloth diapers. Over time, I became involved with community groups like the Toronto Tool Library, Toronto Environmental Alliance, Green Neighbours Network, GreenPAC and the City of Toronto Circular Economy Working Group. And I joined the council at my daughter's school, where I advocate for low waste and community engagement at our fundraising events.

The change was epic. In a few months, we'd gone from your average Toronto family, living a life of relative convenience with occasional thought to environmental impact, to militant zero-wasters, evaluating every action for its carbon footprint. We'd gone from producing maybe two grocery bags of garbage a week to one grocery bag every three to five months. I thought it was going great, and our daughter had no complaints—then again, she'd never known anything different. Mick, however, was less than pleased. I'd unilater-

ally transported our family to an extreme fringe, and the adjustment was hard. Dog-poop bags were verboten, so Mick would use old newspaper. Of course, our beloved beagle, Mort, would inevitably catch a scent and tug hard at the leash mid-scoop, sending poop flying across the sidewalk, which would result in Mick scrambling to retrieve individual nuggets. Like many people, Mick enjoys a splash of milk in his coffee. Because store-bought milk comes in disposable packaging that often ends up in a landfill, I banned it, and we made oat milk instead. But that requires soaking oats then blending them with water, which takes roughly 10 minutes. Frequently, we'd run out, which is a mild-to-extreme nuisance depending on your fatigue level. On occasion, I would hear from the kitchen, "I CAN'T LIVE LIKE THIS!" It was mostly jokingly. Eventually, Mick issued a dairy-based ultimatum: either I had to keep the oat milk stocked or he'd keep a carton of store-bought milk on hand. I agreed to make it and keep it stocked.

At first, I didn't realize how big the dairy debacle was for Mick, but he recently confessed that at one point, he had said to a friend: "If this insufferable woman doesn't let me buy a carton of milk, I might have to leave her." (Again, joking, but ouch!) As I reassessed how my zero-waste endeavours were affecting him, I started to recognize how they were affecting me, too. Everywhere I turned, I saw waste—every street corner, coffee shop, dinner party, bus ride and walk through the park. It bothered me that most of the people I interacted with didn't seem to realize how we were treating the planet. And now I was thinking about it non-stop. I was also spending an inordinate amount of time baking, cooking, grinding and puréeing, and not as much time on my massage business, or with my family without the self-induced pressure of being the perfect environmentalist.

And so, nine months after we'd started, I rethought the entire undertaking. Reducing waste, I decided, doesn't have to mean DEY (do everything yourself). I resolved to stop making bread, since I could buy it directly from a family-owned bakery who let me put the unwrapped loaf into my cloth bag. I gave up on making vanilla extract, toothpaste and bar soap, since I could find them in bulk at Karma Co-op in the Annex, Bare Market on the Danforth, Unboxed Market on Dundas and various shops in Kensington Market. I decided to stop with the no 'poo (it just wasn't working for me), and refilled my shampoo container at Bare Market.

As for Mick, I had to change the way I interacted with him. I decided to stop the constant eco-nagging and just focus on my actions; he could join in if he wanted. As a peace offering, for Valentine's Day, I asked some friends to source plastic bags from their workplaces, and gave him a parcel of poop bags as a gift. What can I say? I'm a hopeless romantic. Eventually, Mick got into the groove on his own. He now brings his own travel mug with him, happily uses rags instead of paper towels and even got into the habit of making his own oat milk, which he boasts to friends about—I help out if I notice we're running low. Recently, he went to the dentist and texted me a photo: he'd brought a cloth napkin so he wouldn't have to use the disposable bib. I fell in love all over again.



HAPPY TIMES

Mick, Sophi and their daughter, Nyla, in their downtown townhouse. Below: a living-room stool doubles as a vermicomposter. Right: the amount of trash they throw out in a typical week

