



## GEMMA

In our house we try to minimize our environmental footprint as much as we can within our capabilities/financial reach. It doesn't mean we do everything that could be done but we do our best!

We try to be careful with what we eat and have a zero-waste policy when it comes to food, so, for us that means that we do not overbuy food and make good use of our freezer so that things don't go off. We have at least one meal a week that is cobbled together from leftovers although this does sometimes mean odd combinations. but we embrace that and laugh about it! We have no pre-conceived ideas about what we will or won't eat, so if something is reduced at the supermarket that we think we can make a meal out of we see that as an opportunity. We buy an organic veg box each week for a number of reasons – far less plastic packaging, the veg lasts far longer than supermarket veg, we prefer not to ingest pesticides – and we build meals around the veg which encourages experimental cooking. We make our own bread with flour bought in bulk from a mill in Oxfordshire, who source all their wheat from local farms.

Whilst we are mindful of use-by dates and best before dates, we do not see them as something that must be obeyed. Our rule is if it looks ok, then smells ok, then finally tastes ok, chances are it is ok! We have never given ourselves food poisoning for what it's worth! We try to only buy food with sustainably sourced palm oil or preferably none at all, but this is a difficult one to achieve. We are currently looking at commercial honey production with a view to making an informed choice.

We do not waste meat/poultry. If we buy a chicken, we will get at least 3 meals from it. For example, the first meal may be a roast, then the chicken will be cut up to give enough for a chicken, leek and mushroom pie, then there is usually enough left for chicken fajitas. The carcass is then picked which provides 2-3 meals for the cat and finally it is boiled to make stock for soup.

We try to use more ecologically friendly products if we can afford them. For washing I use Smol washing capsules and fabric conditioner (<https://smolproducts.com/>). The laundry capsules come through the post in a small cardboard package and have a far lower chemical content than other detergents. The fabric conditioner is 100% animal fat free and comes in bottles made from 100% post-consumer waste. They are delivered in a cardboard box that can be used to return the bottles for refilling or recycling. For the dishwasher I use Smol dishwasher tablets too for their lower level of chemicals and their cardboard packaging. We always check that toiletries have not been tested on animals.

We only put on heating if we have first put on extra layers and still feel cold and we are careful with water usage.

We try to buy second-hand if appropriate if we need something, although we are not big consumers. We still have a video player for example! We don't always need the latest thing and most of our daughters' clothes have

been hand-me-downs. In fact, there's nothing they love more than the exciting rummage through a bag of clothes a friend has passed to us to see what's there.

We try to recycle everything that can be recycled and are careful to recycle properly i.e. all recycled food containers are washed before they are put into the recycling bin. We try only to drive when necessary. If we need a few bits from the shops for example and nothing heavy, I will walk to the shops and back (a couple of miles) rather than take the car. We would never sit parked in the car with the engine running.

When it comes to crafting after a bit of a frenzy of yarn buying when I first learnt to crochet, I am now much more able to exercise self-control! I don't allow myself to buy yarn unless I have a project in mind and know the exact quantity that I need and when an interesting new Crochetalong is launched I do try to find yarn in my stash that may be appropriate before considering purchasing a yarn pack. The same applies to sewing. I choose a project before I purchase the fabric so that I know the metreage I need. I also find myself saving favourite items of clothing that have worn out (and I do wear clothes until they wear out!) so that I can potentially reuse the parts of the fabric that are in good condition.

In summary, we try to consider the environmental impact of all aspects of our lifestyle and make changes where we can manage them, particularly with regard to cost (we would love to buy organic meat for example but simply can't afford it). Living thoughtfully and making small changes that then become a way of life seem to be the best way forward for us.

