

A woman with short, wavy blonde hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved top. She is holding a piece of crumpled white plastic in her right hand, positioned near her face. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall mood is somber and focused on the environmental issue of plastic waste.

PLASTIC FREE JULY

SURVIVAL GUIDE

E-BOOK
BY @PLASTICFREEMERMAID

Hello!

Thank you for your interest in reducing single use plastics. I am very excited that awareness of plastic pollution is growing! While we wait for legislation and industry to adjust to better suit the environment, we can surely take responsibility for our individual waste created. Of all that we do, reducing our use of disposable plastics will make a huge, trackable, visible, positive impact on the planet. Your trash will shrink, therefore contributing to a smaller landfill pile.

Plastic never biodegrades and each individual piece poses a serious threat to wildlife. In just one week we go through 10 billion plastic bags worldwide. Australia burns through more than 50k takeaway coffee cups every half hour! In the USA an average of 2.5 million plastic bottles are used every hour and over 500 million straws are used daily! You can find scary statistics online, I aim to keep this guide positive and solution-oriented. The choices we make truly do matter—if each of us cuts back, we can lower these statistics.

A whole month without plastics seems daunting especially when you get to the grocery store and see almost everything on your list is packaged or bagged in plastic. This is where I step in to help identify sustainable and simple solutions to the every day plastic struggle.

Plastic Free July (or any month you commit to go plastic free) is designed to be extreme. It is meant to first build awareness of the pervasiveness of plastic and secondly to facilitate reasonable changes to our routines that could assist in reducing overall waste. It may feel overwhelming at times, so remember to just do your best and that even small changes make a difference.

Be patient. Be curious. Most of all, be CREATIVE!

Love, Kate

@plasticfreemermaid

iquitplastics.com

Share your journey #iquitplastics



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I QUIT PLASTICS

WHAT IS PLASTIC FREE JULY?

Plastic Free July is a **global challenge** for people to refuse single-use plastic during the entire month of July. "Single-use" plastics include plastic shopping bags, plastic cups, straws, plastic food or product packaging, and anything intended to be used once and then discarded. It is designed as an opportunity to **inspire awareness and encourage changes** that could linger beyond the month-long challenge.

WHY?

Plastic is **designed to be durable and it does not biodegrade**. It is irresponsible to use an indestructible material for single-use or disposable items and packaging. Plastic is killing wildlife that mistake it for food, building up in both the natural environment and landfills, and even finding its way into the human body through food packaging and seafood. Plastic is relatively new to the human routine, so we are certainly capable of reversing its clutches on our consumption. The beauty of quitting plastics is that we revert back to how we—humans—used to live, eating fresh whole foods, gardening, using beautiful baskets instead of plastics. It is not just a challenge, but a lifestyle, and it is so worth changing for.

HOW?

We each have different routines and habits. To create a strategy for an entire month off plastics we first have to become aware of the plastics used and discarded in our individual lives. Once we are ready with our personal plan of action, we can recruit friends to join the challenge and create rewards as incentive.

GET STARTED...



@plasticfreemermaid

RUBBISH AUDIT

1. COLLECT YOUR RUBBISH

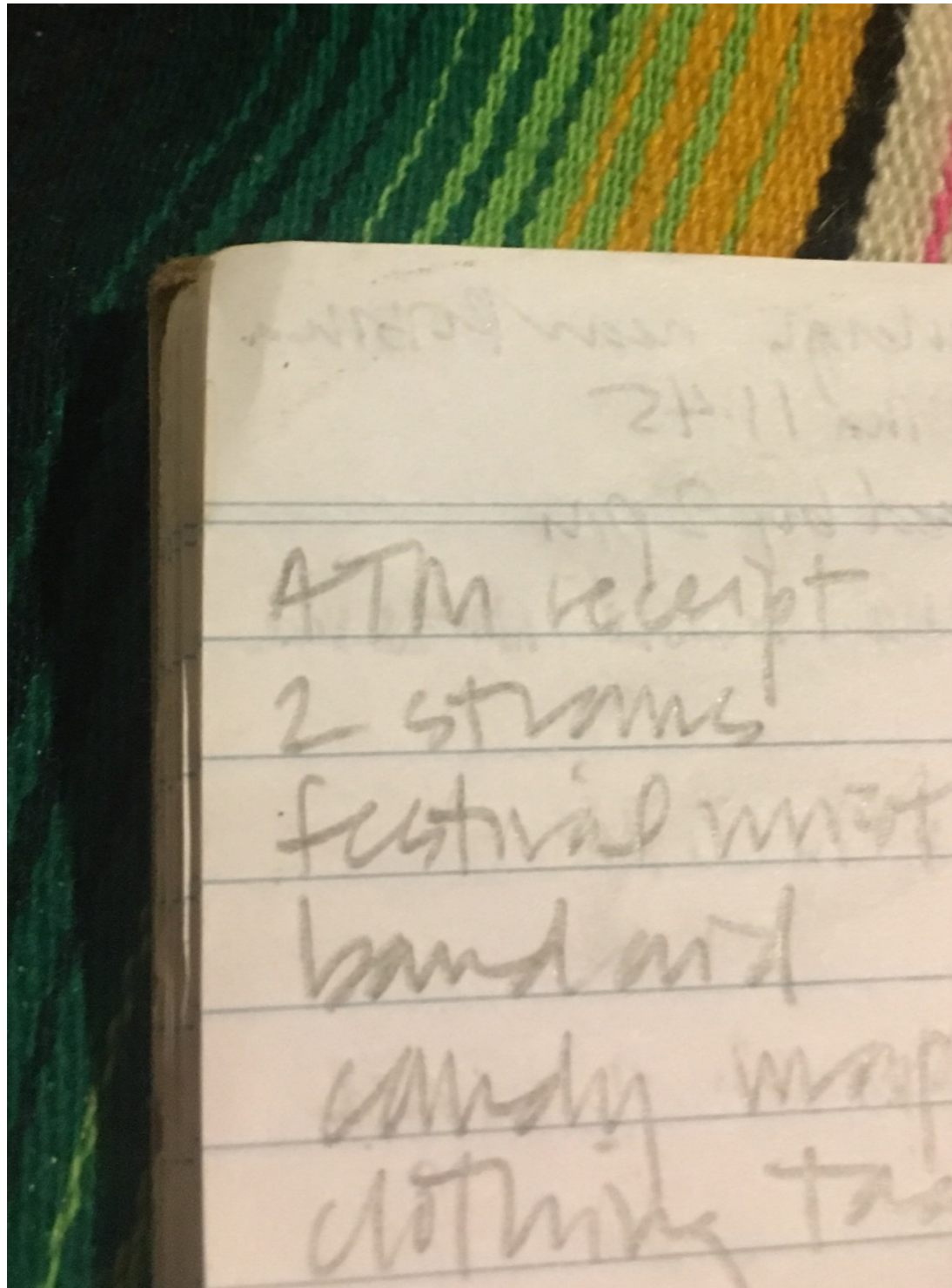
To build your awareness of the plastic specific to your life—I recommend literally keeping it.

Set up a jar or a box, where you collect each and every item of plastic rubbish that you encounter, create, or use each day for one week. **Be honest. Be ruthless.** Collect it ALL. This helps us know where we are most likely to encounter plastics, so we can make a plan to avoid them.

You are already collecting your rubbish in the bin, so you can save time by dumping out the contents (before their final trip to the roadside collection bin) to get a fair assessment of your baseline plastic use. Wear gardening gloves if it looks messy!



2. IDENTIFY THE SOURCE



At the end of the week **compile a list** of all the plastic you collected and where it came from. This will help you understand where you need to make adjustments to your routine.

Whatever the source, it just takes a bit of creativity to avoid using plastics. Whenever you feel stuck, remember, our great grandparents had no trouble without plastics!

For parents, going plastic free requires a decent amount of planning. With kids, it will definitely save your sanity if they understand how their participation directly benefits dolphins or if they have a reward to look forward to!

MAKE A PLAN

The first greatest skill in avoiding plastics is being creative! Thinking outside of the box (or plastic bag!) and creating a new way around the sad but true, standard of disposable plastics.

The second greatest skill is having forethought or a predetermined plan. Being prepared when we go out to buy stuff can be very helpful in avoiding plastics!





3. WHERE TO SHOP

Planning meals ahead of time helps us avoid plastics. Knowing when you are shopping, what you are buying, and how much you need will prevent panic when you arrive at the shops and see the aisles lined with plastic packaged goods.

***"Shop the peripheries of the supermarket & stay out of the middle."
-Michael Pollan, Food Rules***

SUPERMARKET

The produce section, where the fresh fruits and vegetables can be found, is a safe zone. Amazing that these are the very whole foods that keep us healthy and free of disease!

"Eat food without labels." - [Joshua Reed, Dietician](#)

Avoid the plastic produce bags on rolls. Most fruit & veg are designed with a thick, durable skin to endure weather or dirt, so the trip from the store to your house will not be a problem. Hopefully produce gets washed before consumption anyways. If you require a bag for dates or spinach, plan ahead and bring your own. If you are in a bind, **use a paper bag from the mushroom section**. Paper bags are still single-use and have a surprisingly large environmental impact; use sparingly and reuse as much as possible. Avoid the "biodegradable" plastic bags, these still take about 100 years to break "up" into the environment and could still choke a turtle.

"We are using the terminology of plastic breaking 'up' instead of 'down' to show an increasing problem for the environment as the plastic degrades into smaller and smaller pieces." - [Heidi Taylor, Tangaroa Blue](#)

Buy products in **glass jars with a metal screw top lid**; think pickles or pesto. The jars can be reused at home for storage. Bring these jars or other containers to the deli to get filled with olives or cheeses.

If you find yourself at check-out without a reusable bag, find a friendly employee and **politely ask for a cardboard box**. Food was transported to the store in a box, so there must be some available. Explain your intentions with a big smile and you should be able to find someone willing to add a few more chip bags to the shelf to free up a box for your groceries.



When you grab your shopping list, reach for:

- *a reusable bag or basket*
- *jars, reused paper bags, nut milk bags or sew your own cloth bags from mesh or old t-shirts for loose produce or bulk items*

FARMER'S MARKET

Eat healthy, support local, and embrace a plastic free lifestyle at the local farmer's market. The farmer's market is a gorgeous experience in itself, allowing you the opportunity to chat and get to know local growers, stay in the loop with foods that are in season, and enjoy a slice of community heaven.

Bring your own basket or bag to stock up on fresh veggies, bread, eggs, etc. It also helps to bring your own small bags if you don't want to have loose green beans or tomatoes rolling around!

Everything we do has an impact.

Be compassionate with yourself (and others!) as you do your best to make sustainable choices.

BULK FOODS

Identify your nearest bulk foods store and decide how you can fit it into your shopping schedule. If it is quite far away, make a detailed list to minimise trips. Ideally this shop has lots of containers full of oats, flours, nuts, seeds, grains, spices, even soaps, oils, and sweeteners with plenty of organic options from local sources.

Generally, these shops have paper bags for you to use. I recommend you bring a bag, box, or basket with **empty glass jars and containers to fill**. This is where the pesto and olive jars come in handy! You can also reuse yogurt tubs and other plastic containers to give them a longer life cycle. This is also a great time to make the switch from nasty cleaning products with heaps of chemicals over to natural cleaning powders!



4. MAKE YOUR MEALS

Quitting plastics is a win for your health!

Eliminating the plastic packaged foods means **aligning with fresh, whole foods**. Plastic-wrapped foods contain preservatives, additives, and scientists have found most plastic leaches chemicals into the food or drink they contain. **“Links between packaging and obesity, diabetes and neurological diseases need to be explored,** scientists warned.” (Stephens, Pippa. “Scientists query health risk of food package chemicals.” *BBC* 19 February 2014. <[BBC](#)>.)

Action was taken on banning one chemical additive or “phthalate,” BPA, which was proven to leach into everything from drinking water to baby’s bottles and cause negative health effects. It has been difficult for scientists to track and analyse the long term effects of small amounts of chemicals leached from packaged food since there is no population unexposed. Safe to say, the high levels of fat, sugar, and salt in the packaged, processed foods are concern enough to avoid them. (Claudio, Luz. “Our Food: Packaging & Public Health.” *Environ Health Perspectives* June 2012. <[National Center for Biotechnology Information](#)>.)

Avoiding plastic wrapped junk food, inspires us to get more creative with meals. The **curious in the kitchen will benefit the most** in this challenge.

Here are some suggestions from my taste-buds to yours...



BREAKFAST

- **Cereal or porridge:** Definitely avoid the cereal section, the muesli bars, the packaged pop-tarts, etc. You can buy bulk oats and **make your own muesli**/granola with seeds, nuts, dried fruit, and maple syrup. Make warm porridge with oats, semolina, or even quinoa.
- **Milk:** Buy in **glass bottles**, cardboard cartons, or directly from your local dairy farmer (check at Farmer's Market). You can also **make nut milks** from almonds, macadamias, or even coconut flakes. Canned milks come in tins that are recyclable, but are often lined with plastic—use at your own risk.
- **Fruit:** Is always a good idea. Just plain papaya is a fabulous way to start the day, as it has digestive enzymes which help your belly break it down and get maximum nutrition. Try a fruit salad sprinkled with nuts and seeds for added protein. Try mixing chia seeds with milk or an herbal tea to make a pudding, add fruit and nuts once it has set.
- **Scramble:** If you like a heartier start to your day, make a scramble with eggs and/or veggies.
- **Breakfast Sandwich:** Find a local bakery that makes their breads with top ingredients fresh. Bring your own bag or let them pack in a paper sack for you. Avocado smashed on toast with lemon, salt, & pepper is a dream.
- **Breakfast Salad:** Sounds weird, feels amazing. Have salad for breakfast!
- **Cuppa:** Fresh coffee beans can be purchased in bulk from a local roast house. **Bulk tea leaves** are far better than tea bags, which have teflon in them! I **grow fresh peppermint** and put a few leaves in hot water for a soothing fresh tea (pot your mint in a separate tray or outside of your contained garden, it *will* take over!).



LUNCH

- **Packed lunch:** Use reusable glass jars, plastic or tin containers to pack up your sandwich, pasta, or salad. There are some cool sandwich sleeves online if that's more your jam. **Pack your own silverware or chopsticks.** I am a fan of the tea spoon, as it fits anywhere. If you have these on you at all times, you won't be caught in a bind when you walk past a delicious gelato place dishing out free samples on plastic spoons.
- **Home lunch:** go nuts in your pantry with all of your pre-purchased bulk grains and pastas or get crafty with your fridge full of fresh veggies. Your **shelves will be stacked with spices** galore to bring any concoction to life. You can buy oil, vinegar, mustard, and many other dressings and condiments in glass with metal screw top lids. Try to anticipate what you will need to keep your meals delicious and satisfying. You **don't want to deprive yourself into a relapse!**

DINNER

- **Dinner party:** Resolve to do the dishes. You can buy bulk dish washing soap or powder for your dishwasher, or just push up your sleeves and scrub up a healthy sweat. Do not take the “easy” route of disposable plastic cups, plates, or utensils. It might save you 20 minutes, but it will be around for approximately 1000 years! Not the future we aim to create.
- **Meat:** Form a relationship with your local butcher and discuss how to minimise plastic in your purchasing. Would it work if they wrap the drippy meat in butcher’s paper and then you can put straight into a tupperware or sealable, reusable plastic bag? I am not a meat eater, but it seems like each carnivore I work with comes up with a unique plan with their local butcher. This also guarantees you know where it comes from and how fresh it is.

SNACKS

- **Buy Bulk:** The easiest option is to buy bulk quantities of nuts, seeds and dried fruit to **make trail mix** and pack in little jars. *RECIPE:* For a tasty savoury snack, bake or roast nuts and seeds with a light sprinkle of oil and spices.
- **Crackers and chips:** These are almost always packed in plastic, you can go without or make your own. Stale bread can be salvaged into crouton-like crisps. I make chips by baking big fat, thinly sliced sweet potatoes sprinkled with paprika and salt. I love making my own crackers from seeds in the oven (pictured)—surprisingly simple!
- **Dips:** Once you have your chips, it's time to blend up some dips. Cheap and easy, bulk buy and soak chickpeas for a nice hummus with garlic and chilis or whatever you fancy. Experiment! Grow basil, blend with nuts or seeds and oil for a pesto. Goats cheese often comes in a glass jar. Often the deli has some cheeses out on display, ask them to pack them straight into the paper and wrap up tight instead of putting in a little plastic container, or bring your own jar and ask them to use your container. **Be polite, informative, and positive** to encourage their participation and facilitate their understanding!
- **Fruit:** always a safe and delicious snack.



RECIPE

Mix together flax, chia, & any other chopped seeds and nuts in a bowl with warm water, let sit for 20 minutes to allow water to absorb. Add in salt and spices, spread evenly into large, greased up baking tray, bake for an hour, checking often to avoid burning!



Grow & dry your own tea leaves.

DESSERT

"If it came from a plant, eat it; if it was made in a plant, don't."

- Michael Pollan, Food Rules

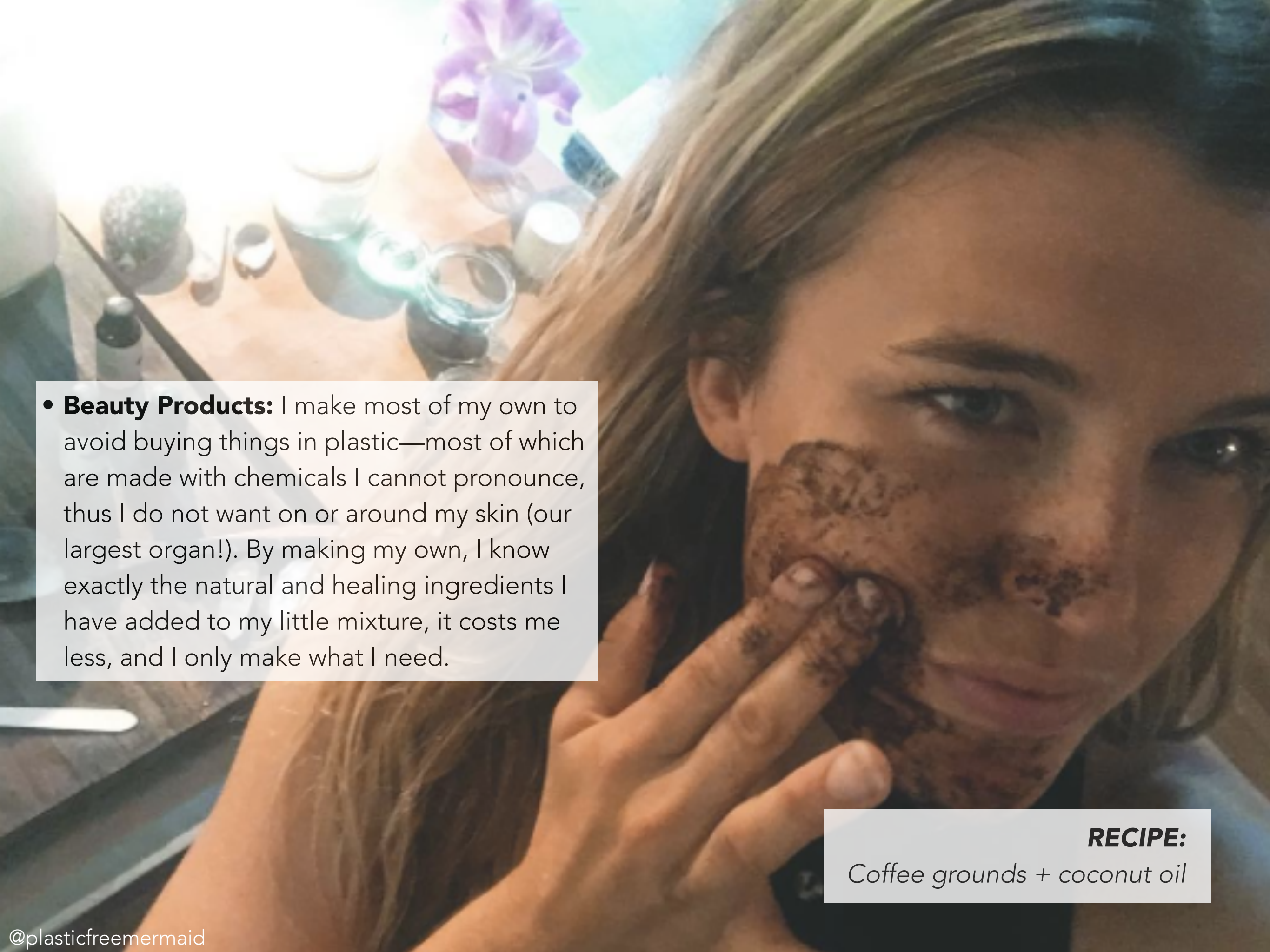
- **Chocolate:** This is surprisingly **easy to make**. *RECIPE:* Melt cacao nibs in a pot on low heat, stir in cacao powder. Pour into a baking tray or water-tight cookie tin, sprinkle in sea salt, coconut, chilli, nuts, etc. and let sit in the freezer until hard! Break into bite sized pieces and eat immediately (or store in freezer).
- **Candy: Avoid any ingredients a child cannot pronounce** or you cannot picture in its natural state, likely rules out all candy. Fortunately, there are many recipes on the internet! I have successfully made snickers bars and share my recipe is on iquitplastics.com !
- **Ice Cream:** *RECIPE:* Blend up and freeze coconut milk with banana, swirl a maple syrup date mixture throughout to make a vegan salted caramel ice cream.
- **Cake:** Cakes packaged in plastic are contained to "stay fresh," but were probably mass manufactured by people wearing surgical caps! Buy bulk flours, sugars, and eggs from your local farmer. Then get to baking. There is no need to go without super naughty decadent treats.
- **No time:** If you don't have the time and need your fix, find the chocolate blocks wrapped in tin foil and packed in cardboard. My town recycles tinfoil, but most places will not unless you clean it. (Look it up: earth911.org/recycling) Otherwise you can up-cycle it to wrap leftovers or use it to scour crusted pots or your bbq.

5. HOME TIPS

A hand is holding a silver safety razor in the foreground. In the background, there is a bathroom counter with a glass jar, a small plant, and a brass oil lamp. A person's foot is visible near a window with sheer curtains.

You may find yourself challenged by some of your normal purchases for your daily life, such as razors or shampoo, face lotion or cleaning spray.

My suggestion is to **get creative and experimental** in this time of plastic avoidance. Invest in a stainless steel razor with blades that last months & come packed in cardboard. Shop for products made from sustainable materials, like dish scrubbing brushes made from coconut husks or locally made bars of soap! Check out my iquitplastics.com if you are interested in DIY recipes.

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- A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair applying a dark brown, textured scrub to her face. She is using her fingers to rub the scrub onto her cheek and chin. In the background, a wooden countertop is visible with various items including a purple orchid in a glass vase, a white mug, and several glass jars. The lighting is warm and indoor.
- **Beauty Products:** I make most of my own to avoid buying things in plastic—most of which are made with chemicals I cannot pronounce, thus I do not want on or around my skin (our largest organ!). By making my own, I know exactly the natural and healing ingredients I have added to my little mixture, it costs me less, and I only make what I need.

RECIPE:

Coffee grounds + coconut oil



RECIPE:

1/2 cup organic coconut oil
1/3 cup organic arrowroot
1/4 cup organic bicarb soda
1-2 drops essential oil (
geranium or lotus flower)

deodorant

- **WASH YOUR CLOTHES LESS:**

Heard of **Microfibres**? Each time we do the washing, thousands of tiny fibres are agitated loose from our clothing and expelled out with the dirty water passing through our water treatment and filtration facilities into our natural water systems. Among the various types of micro plastics that have been found in aquatic systems, plastic microfibres have been found to be the most prominent form in some habitats, specifically near dense human populations. Once in the environment, these fibres absorb chemicals and toxins and are readily consumed by aquatic organisms, which can result in short-term problems like gastrointestinal blockages and starvation as well as long-term organ stress and reproductive disturbances. These issues are translated to humans which ingest microfibres or creatures with microfibres in their bellies.

A town of 100,000 people releases 15,000 plastic bags worth of plastic into the water systems every day after treatment. ("Microfiber Pollution Project Brief." <http://www2.bren.ucsb.edu/~pataplast/> Spring 2017.) A Study funded by Patagonia.

- **Wash your synthetic clothing only when necessary**
- **SPOT CLEAN and hand wash your clothes**
- **Front-loading washing machines shed less fibres than top-loading**
- **Invest in a filter for your washing machine**
- **Ask your local water treatment facility to ramp up their filtration systems**
- **Pre-order a CoraBall microfibre-catching laundry ball**

• **Food Storage:** Instead of single-use plastic like zip-locks and cling wrap use your tupperware or try glass jars, stainless steel containers, and even **repurposed cookie tins!** Get creative recycling and repurposing whatever you already have. I still have a plastic bag an airline gave me years ago that I cycle through my home food system on occasion. Instead of cling wrap, use **beeswax wraps**, a fun DIY project or available at most health shops or online.

• **Cleaning Products:** Use a few drops of **eucalyptus oil** and/or vinegar in a gallon of water to mop floors, clean counter tops, bathrooms, etc. Use old, stained towels and cloths for rags. Recycle old spray bottles and fill with 1 part essential oil and 50-100 parts water for air freshener.

• **Waste Management: Bin liner? I do not use one!** I painstakingly sort out any recyclables, so I do not create much trash. What I do throw away is always washed and dried before landing in the bin, so there is never a mess to be contained by a bin bag. If you love a bin bag, try dumping the contents directly into your trash can and reusing the bag. **Brush up on your local recycling opportunities** to ensure you are being a help, not a hindrance to your local waste sorters.

Avoid trapping dog poo in plastic bags for eternity. Try using biodegradable or paper bags.

• **Team Spirit: Work as a team with your housemates.** Help them come around to the idea of joint investment in bulk items. Then kit out the laundry room with bulk bought detergent, bars of soap for the bathrooms, coconut husk scrubby brushes at the sink, and collectively save jars for storage purposes. Buy paper wrapped bulk toilet paper!

Australia: support Whogivesacrapp!

6. OUT & ABOUT TIPS

We must always **anticipate the plastics before we encounter them**. For example, avoid the straw in your drink by requesting this of the waiter politely. They often don't hear you or confuse your request, so explain that you are doing Plastic Free July and hope not to take the straw home to your Trash Jar. This extra information will help them remember and **plant a seed of awareness** about plastic pollution! Think ahead, what might come with a little plastic stake? If you usually cannot eat all of your food, bring a tupperware or glass jar. If you find yourself without your own container, ask them to put it in a cardboard box or wrapped up in paper.

If you forget everything else, try to avoid these four items, considered the worst and most easily avoidable:

- **Plastic bags:** Bring your own bag, use a box, or even your t-shirt like a pouch.
- **Straws:** Skip the straw, they suck! (Need convincing? Search "straw up turtles nose" on Youtube)
- **Drink bottles:** Reuse, refill and bring your own bottle, or abstain if it comes in plastic.
- **Takeaway Coffee Cups:** Get your own reusable cup! If you forget a cup, ask the friendly barista if they have any mugs for "here." In fact, consider pausing and enjoying your coffee there at the cafe. If all else fails, skip the plastic lid, **go topless on your coffee**. #toplessforthesea

If you do eat out, **bring your own utensils and reusable container** to avoid a little plastic box and flimsy plastic fork. If you forget, either ask if they have something non-plastic you could borrow, seek out some wooden chopsticks, or **you may have to abstain!** An interesting aspect to this experience—the phenomena of sacrificing our convenience or pleasure to avoid plastics. A healthy exercise indeed.



Here's a scary thought:

Cardboard takeaway coffee cups are lined with plastic, which is why they don't get soggy or leak. Researchers have found that hot liquid can cause potentially harmful chemicals to leach out of plastics much faster than usual. Imagine the boiling hot coffee sitting in a plastic cup. It is freaky to think of the chemicals which could transfer to your morning cuppa!

A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a blue patterned top and holding a white mug with a silver rim in her left hand. The background shows a beach with waves and a rocky cliffside under a clear sky.

READY FOR ACTION

7. TEAM UP & SET REWARDS

Team Up

The point of this is to reduce plastic use, so why not make a greater impact by recruiting friends, family, or co-workers to join you. The support and camaraderie helps immensely. Create a Facebook page for your team to share tips and create discussion around your experience. Perhaps all can chip in for a prize for whomever uses the least amount of plastic over the month!

Reward Your Efforts

Set goals and desirable rewards to entice yourself to keep the commitment. Let your goals and rewards be public, so that you are accountable and cannot cheat!

Join Plastic Free July:

Share your journey with the greater participating plastic free family #plasticfreejuly @plasticfreejuly
Join a local campaign or event at plasticfreejuly.com to get support & find community.

Connect:

Follow @plasticfreemermaid for more tips & contests. Participate in the on-going contest, tag @plasticfreemermaid #plasticfreewithmermaid in any photos from your journey & be eligible to win a copy of my extensive Recipe book (coming soon!) and other sustainable prizes from participating sponsors.

CELEBRATE



No matter how you go in the month off plastics, be sure to review and celebrate your efforts. It may be tempting to plastic-relapse, indulging in all of the plastic items you had to avoid for July. I invite you to take the time to reflect if that is really necessary to your happiness, or perhaps it is social pressure or consumer conditioning.

This is the time to celebrate the sacrifices you made and evaluate which changes are worth adopting into your normal routine.

Take some time to **reflect on what worked and what didn't**. Did you enjoy the lifestyle? Were you cooking more? Did you get your hands dirty in the garden/ Did you meet local farmers and learn anything new? Could any of these ways around plastic become habits or work into your regular routine?

In this case, any change you adopt is extremely positive!

STAY CONNECTED

- Follow [@plasticfreemermaid](#) for daily plastic free tips and comment any questions or suggestions.
- Tag **#iquitplastics**
- Tag **#toplessforthesea** whenever you save a takeaway coffee cup from becoming waste.
- Tune in to [iquitplastics.com](https://www.iquitplastics.com) for recipes, tips, and information on Conservation Mermaid Retreats.
- Email me mermaid@iquitplastics.com with any questions, ideas, suggestions, or to collaborate!

An aerial photograph of a body of water, likely a lake or a wide river. The water is a deep teal or greenish-blue color. The surface is covered in numerous small, concentric ripples that create a textured, shimmering effect. In the lower center of the frame, there is a very bright, circular reflection of the sun, which creates a strong lens flare and illuminates the surrounding water. The overall scene is serene and natural.

THANK YOU

RESOURCES

- Get involved in the [Australian Marine Debris Initiative](#) with [Tangaroa Blue](#).
- Borrow an [ocean trawl](#) from [5 Gyres](#).
- [Take 3](#) - An organisation reminding us to pick up at least three pieces of rubbish when you leave the beach, waterway, or anywhere. They have great education programs!
- [Green Peace](#) - **[sign the petition](#)** to ban plastic bags!
- [Boomerang Alliance](#) - An alliance of environmental groups that have led the policy change charge for the container deposit scheme and banning the bag. Original Gangsters.
- Follow our campaign to help our beautiful home of Byron to go Plastic Free [@plasticfreebyron](#)
[Plastic Free Byron](#)
- Team up with [Seaside Scavenge](#) to trade trash for treasure!
- Invest in reusables with [Clean Coast Collective](#) or [Rechusable](#)
- Watch Australia's [War on Waste](#)