

Family of eco-warriors

Becoming a parent had British expatriate Rebecca Flecken, who has been living in Singapore with her family for six years, reflecting on the environmental distress the world is in. She started switching to eco-friendlier alternatives room by room. When her husband and children joined in, green living became a family lifestyle.

Follow the 5Rs

- REFUSE** Saying no to wasteful choices
- REDUCE** Being conscious about consumption
- REUSE** Choosing reusables over disposables
- RECYCLE** Sorting any waste you generate
- ROT** Composting biodegradable waste

Rebecca Flecken, 36, regional manager of intra-Asia sea freight at logistics company Kuehne + Nagel

Matthias Flecken, 34, regional key account manager at logistics company Kuehne + Nagel

Charlotte, four

Alexander, two



FAST FACTS



Last year, Singaporeans generated

763,100

tonnes of food waste, of which

17%

was recycled, according to the National Environment Agency.



Last year, Singaporeans generated

949,300

tonnes of plastic waste, of which

4%

was recycled, according to the NEA.

Last year, the beauty industry produced more than

120 billion

units of cosmetics packaging, most of which was non-recyclable plastic, according to Britain-based international organisation Zero Waste Week.

TIPS FROM ECO-FAMILY

FOOD

REFUSE extra food

- Do not over-order when eating out; ask stall owners for less rice/noodles if you think you might not finish them

REDUCE food waste

- 1 Cook just enough to eat
- 2 Save money and time by helping yourself to extra food from events or individuals

• **Telegram group:** Food Rescue @ Events (Singapore)

• **Apps (iOS and Android):** Olio, Makan Rescue

• **Facebook group:** SG Food Rescue

REUSE utensils and food storage containers

- 1 Carry a reusable "takeaway kit" with you: water bottle, reusable straw, bamboo cutlery, cup, lunch box
- 2 Use lunch boxes or glass containers to store food instead of cling film or aluminium foil

REUSE leftovers and food scraps

- 1 Reheat leftovers the next day for meals; for example, make fried rice from leftover rice and dishes
- 2 Get creative with food scraps: For instance, jam can be made from apple cores and peels

ROT or compost food scraps by making your own compost bin

- Instructions are available online: <https://compostinginsingapore.kainosis.com/make-your-own-compost-bin-for-under-20>

REDUCE packaging and energy usage

- 1 Buy groceries from eco-friendly sources

- Take your own bags to supermarkets or wet markets
- Buy dried goods from wholesale centres such as Albert Centre wholesale market, pick and mix areas in supermarkets or stores that allow you to bring your own containers (for example, at Scoop Wholefoods or UnPackt)

- 2 Buy local produce to lower your carbon footprint; this means food travels a shorter distance, and hence uses less energy, to reach you

• **Bonus:** Eating locally means that food will be fresher – and therefore taste better and perhaps retain more nutrients – than food shipped across the globe

- 3 Grow your own food to lower your carbon footprint and save on packaging

• Join a community garden by inquiring at your local Residents' Committee

• For Housing Board flats and other apartments, start a corridor garden by planting fruits, herbs and vegetables you use often (as the corridor is a common space, be careful to keep the garden neat, leave a 1.2m-wide walking space in the corridor and keep your neighbours in the know)

• If you do not have time to garden, choose a low-maintenance gardening system such as a hydroponic or aeroponic garden.

- 4 Make your own snacks instead of buying pre-packaged ones

• **Bonus:** They are usually healthier and cheaper

CLEANING & PERSONAL CARE



REUSE packaging and products

- 1 If you still prefer using liquids, reuse your old bottles by buying refills at any supermarket, or taking bottles to eco-friendly stores to fill up on cleaning and personal care products

- 2 Switch disposables for reusables by making your own handkerchiefs from old clothes, or reusable facial rounds from cotton rags, for instance.

• Instead of a plastic disposable razor, use an electric razor, or a safety razor with a replaceable blade

• Instead of sanitary pads or tampons, use reusable sanitary products such as cloth pads or a menstrual cup

- 3 Upcycle items instead of throwing them away: old clothes can be turned into cleaning rags, used toothbrushes can be used for cleaning hard to reach corners in the bathroom or kitchen

RECYCLE/ROT by choosing recyclable or biodegradable materials

- 1 Use a bamboo toothbrush instead of a plastic one; remove bristles and compost brush body once used

- 2 Use a bidet, or bamboo toilet rolls in recyclable/biodegradable packaging, instead of regular toilet paper

REFUSE travel toiletries

- Instead of using disposables provided in hotels, bring along a bag with containers filled with needed toiletries

REDUCE packaging and energy usage

- 1 Make your own cleaning and personal care items such as shampoo and body scrub to lower your carbon footprint, avoid toxic chemicals and reduce packaging waste. An all-purpose cleaner, for instance, can be made from a mixture of water and white vinegar.

- 2 No time to make your own? Choose alternatives with less, or eco-friendlier, packaging

• Choose solid shampoo and soap bars, some of these even come in recyclable packaging

