MY ZERO WASTE KITCHEN

HOLISTIC LIVING · CLEAN COOKING

The 30-Day Zero-Waste Kitchen *Challenge*

Reset, continued. Four themed weeks and one small task a day to turn what you learned in the 7-Day Reset into habits that last.

30 daily tasks
Small, real, built for busy weeks

4 weekly themes
Shop, cook, swap, then lock it in

Reflection boxes
A few lines at the end of each week

Tracker grid
Printable 30-day check-off page

myzerowastekitchen.com

2026 edition

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Reset, continued.

The 7-Day Reset showed you where your kitchen leaks. The next 30 days are about making the fixes stick, one small task at a time, until they're just how your kitchen runs.

01
Start after the Reset
Keep your 7-Day waste log handy. Day 30 asks you to compare against it. No log yet? Start the challenge anyway.

02
One task a day
Each task is one or two sentences and fits around a normal day. Miss one? Do it tomorrow, or swap the order. Nobody's grading.

03
Check it off
Mark each day on the tracker grid on page 7, and track two daily habits, plus one of your own, along the bottom strip.

04
Reflect each week
Every week ends with a short reflection box. Two honest lines are enough. Page 8 pulls it all together.

The four weeks

DAYS 1–7
Shop & Store
Buy what you'll use and keep it fresh longer.

DAYS 8–14
Cook the Whole Ingredient
Stems, tops, peels and stale bread become food.

DAYS 15–21
Swap & Reuse
Fewer disposables, using what you already own.

DAYS 22–30
Lock In Habits
Routines, reminders and the people you live with.

Use what you have
None of these tasks require buying anything new to look the part.

Safety first
Wasting less never means eating food that isn't safe. Storage numbers are sourced on page 9.

Check local rules
Recycling and drop-off options vary by city. Week 3 helps you find yours.

WEEK ONE · DAYS 1–7

Shop & Store

DAY 1

Check your fridge and freezer temperature

FDA says to keep the fridge at or below 40°F and the freezer at 0°F, and that an appliance thermometer is the best way to know. If you have one, put it on a middle shelf today.

- [ ]

DAY 2

Write the list from home

Look in the fridge, freezer and pantry first, then write this week's list. **Add:** how many meals each item covers, as EPA suggests.

- [ ]

DAY 3

Shop for the week you actually have

Check your calendar before you shop. Nights out, late practices and leftovers nights all mean fewer meals to buy for.

- [ ]

DAY 4

Unpack with a plan

Put new groceries behind the older ones. Leafy greens go in the high-humidity drawer, most fruit in the low-humidity drawer (EPA).

- [ ]

DAY 5

Split up the ripeners

Give apples and bananas their own spot away from other produce; EPA notes they release ethylene. Leave berries and grapes unwashed until you eat them.

- [ ]

DAY 6

Prep the one you always lose

Wash and cut the vegetable that usually dies in the drawer, like celery or peppers, and store it in a lidded container at eye level.

- [ ]

DAY 7

Take a freezer inventory

List what's in the freezer on paper taped to the door, then plan one meal around the oldest item. NCHFP says frozen food past its quality window is still safe, just lower in quality.

- [ ]

WEEK 1 REFLECTION · WHAT GOT EASIER, AND WHAT I'LL KEEP DOING

WEEK TWO · DAYS 8–14

Cook the Whole Ingredient

DAY 8

Restart the broth bag

Onion ends, carrot peels, celery leaves and herb stems go in a freezer bag or tub. Skip broccoli and cabbage, which can make broth bitter.

- [ ]

DAY 9

Eat the stems

Slice broccoli stems thin for a stir-fry or slaw. Chop chard or kale stems and start them in the pan a few minutes before the leaves.

- [ ]

DAY 10

Use the tops

Blend carrot tops into pesto, or sauté beet greens like spinach. Wash them well first.
Recipe: myzerowastekitchen.com/root-to-stem-recipes-kitchen-waste/

- [ ]

DAY 11

Leave the skin on

Scrub potatoes, carrots and cucumbers instead of peeling them. **Try:** myzerowastekitchen.com/skin-on-roasted-potatoes/

- [ ]

DAY 12

Stale bread night

Turn the ends and dry slices into croutons, crumbs or a strata. Freeze crumbs in a jar for later.

- [ ]

DAY 13

Simmer the bag

Cover the scraps with water, simmer, strain, then cool in shallow containers and refrigerate within 2 hours (USDA FSIS). Freeze what you won't use in 3 to 4 days, with headspace in jars.

- [ ]

DAY 14

Zest before you juice

Zest lemons, limes or oranges before juicing and freeze the zest. More ideas: myzerowastekitchen.com/ways-to-use-citrus-peels/

- [ ]

WEEK 2 REFLECTION · THE SCRAP I DIDN'T EXPECT TO LIKE, AND WHAT I'LL COOK AGAIN

WEEK THREE · DAYS 15–21

Swap & Reuse

DAY 15

Move the paper towels

Put cloths where the roll used to sit and move the roll into a cabinet. Save paper for the messiest jobs, like grease.

- [ ]

DAY 16

Build a leftovers kit

Stack a few lidded containers sized for one lunch near the stove, so leftovers go straight into ready-to-grab portions.

- [ ]

DAY 17

Give one staple a jar

Move one pantry staple from a bag into a clean, dry jar you already own. Label it with the name and the date you opened it.

- [ ]

DAY 18

Cover it without wrap

For one week, cover bowls with a plate, a lid or an upside-down bowl instead of plastic wrap. Notice how often you actually need the wrap.

- [ ]

DAY 19

Find your film drop-off

Plastic bags and film can't go in household recycling bins, but EPA notes many stores take them back. Find yours and start a bag for it.

- [ ]

DAY 20

Recycle right, not hopeful

Check your city's list for the five things you recycle most. Scrape containers "spatula-clean" (EPA's term); food-soiled items can't be recycled.

- [ ]

DAY 21

Mix one simple cleaner, safely

Use what's on hand: myzerowastekitchen.com/homemade-kitchen-cleaners-diy/. **Safety:** vinegar isn't an EPA-registered disinfectant. Never mix bleach with vinegar or ammonia.

- [ ]

WEEK 3 REFLECTION · THE DISPOSABLE I DIDN'T MISS, AND THE ONE I STILL NEED

WEEK FOUR · DAYS 22–30

Lock In Habits

Nine days this week. The goal is to make the good habits automatic, so they keep going when life gets busy.

DAY 22	**Put "eat-down night" on the calendar.** One recurring dinner a week whose only job is using up what's open.	☐
DAY 23	**Set a fridge-check reminder.** A recurring phone alarm for ten minutes before your usual shopping day.	☐
DAY 24	**Date every leftover.** Keep tape and a marker by the fridge. USDA FSIS gives leftovers 3 to 4 days in the fridge.	☐
DAY 25	**Run a 3-day mini waste log.** Jot down everything tossed for three days, using the categories from the Reset Kit.	☐
DAY 26	**Teach one person one habit.** Show someone at home where the broth bag lives or what the Eat First shelf means.	☐
DAY 27	**Cook once, eat twice.** Make extra on purpose and decide now what the second meal will be, or freeze it in portions.	☐
DAY 28	**Rotate the pantry.** Move older dry goods to the front and newer ones to the back, so the oldest gets used first.	☐
DAY 29	**Write your kitchen rules.** Pick the three habits that stuck best and write them on page 8. Post them inside a cabinet.	☐
DAY 30	**Start a fresh 7-day log.** Use the Reset Kit's waste log again, then compare your counts on page 8.	☐

WEEK 4 REFLECTION · WHICH HABIT RUNS ON ITS OWN NOW, AND WHICH STILL NEEDS A REMINDER

PRINT AND POST ON THE FRIDGE

30-day tracker

Week 1 Shop & Store | **Week 2** Cook the Whole Ingredient | **Week 3** Swap & Reuse | **Week 4** Lock In Habits

1 ☐ Check fridge temp	2 ☐ List from home	3 ☐ Shop for your real week	4 ☐ Unpack with a plan	5 ☐ Split up the ripeners	6 ☐ Prep the one you lose
7 ☐ Freezer inventory	8 ☐ Restart broth bag	9 ☐ Eat the stems	10 ☐ Use the tops	11 ☐ Leave the skin on	12 ☐ Stale bread night
13 ☐ Simmer the bag	14 ☐ Zest, then juice	15 ☐ Move the paper towels	16 ☐ Leftovers kit	17 ☐ Give a staple a jar	18 ☐ Cover without wrap
19 ☐ Find film drop-off	20 ☐ Recycle right	21 ☐ One safe cleaner	22 ☐ Eat-down night	23 ☐ Fridge-check reminder	24 ☐ Date every leftover
25 ☐ 3-day mini log	26 ☐ Teach one habit	27 ☐ Cook once, eat twice	28 ☐ Rotate the pantry	29 ☐ Write kitchen rules	30 ☐ Fresh 7-day log

Daily habit strip

Check a square each day you did it. Write in a third habit of your own.

HABIT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Ate from Eat First																														
Scraps to bag or compost																														

DAYS 29 AND 30

Your kitchen, after 30 days.

Compare your Reset week with your fresh 7-day log. Then decide what stays. A short list of habits you'll actually keep beats a long one you won't.

Waste log: then and now

CATEGORY	RESET WEEK	DAY 30 WEEK
Produce		
Dairy & eggs		
Meat & fish		
Bread & grains		
Leftovers		
Packaging		
Other		

Keep, tweak or drop

HABIT	KEEP	TWEAK	DROP
List from home			
Eat First shelf			
Broth bag			
Cloths over paper			
Eat-down night			
Dating leftovers			

My three kitchen rules

RULE 1

RULE 2

RULE 3

Post them where you'll see them. Inside a cabinet door or on the fridge, next to your city's recycling list.

Thirty days, done.
Now it's just how you cook.

You won't keep every task from this challenge, and you don't need to. Keep your three rules, run a 7-day log now and then, and come back to a week's theme whenever things slip.

Every Sunday

One practical, sourced post in your inbox: storage, scrap recipes and plastic-free swaps.

Go deeper

Freezer setup: myzerowastekitchen.com/zero-waste-freezer-blueprint/ · Pantry: /zero-waste-pantry-reset/

Compost the rest

For small kitchens: myzerowastekitchen.com/bokashi-composting-small-kitchens-guide/

Sources

1. U.S. FDA. Are You Storing Food Safely? fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-storing-food-safely
2. U.S. EPA. Preventing Wasted Food at Home. epa.gov/recycle/preventing-wasted-food-home
3. USDA FSIS. Leftovers and Food Safety. fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety
4. National Center for Home Food Preservation. How Long Can I Store Frozen Foods? nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/freeze-general-information/how-long-can-i-store-frozen-foods/
5. National Center for Home Food Preservation. Headspace to Allow. nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/freeze-general-information/headspace-to-allow/
6. U.S. EPA. How Do I Recycle Common Recyclables? epa.gov/recycle/how-do-i-recycle-common-recyclables
7. New Mexico State University Extension. Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products (G-304). pubs.nmsu.edu/_g/G304/
8. Washington State Department of Health. Bleach Mixing Dangers. doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/HealthyHome/Contaminants/BleachMixingDangers
9. FoodSafety.gov. FoodKeeper App (USDA FSIS with Cornell University and the Food Marketing Institute). foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app

This challenge is general guidance, not medical, nutrition or food-safety advice. When in doubt about a specific food, check USDA's FoodKeeper app. Follow local recycling and composting rules and standard food-safety practice. © 2026 My Zero Waste Kitchen, a Dan Duda Ventures company.