**Something for the weekend....Action #22: Think about lunch boxes**

The lunch box is an important tool to reducing waste; both the box itself and all future contents. A staple since school and with a market now so vast, the mind boggles when choosing a new one. For adults and children.

FIRSTLY - why the need to continually buy new ones? INVEST in one for life. For you and your kids, if you should have them. Or REUSE what you have!

So far this steel lunchbox pictured has lasted one 7 year old over a year. Light, robust, compact but roomy enough; it is easily cleaned at the end of each use, with no musty, manky, build up of unpleasant odour in previous lined lunch 'bags' which featured brightly coloured characters no longer a favourite after about 5mins....and eventually had to be binned within 6 months despite attempts to clean and deodourise. It is also used interchangeably across different family members beyond the school hours. A winner.

On the other hand, this 3 year old has survived just fine with repurposed (and decorated ) single use plastic boxes, complete with a canvas bag found amongst a stash already at home. The habit of reusing rather than buying new is normal and natural to this young Wastebuster. It is so important we facilitate positive attitudes and expectations amongst new and future generations. Start them young!

SECONDLY - the point of a lunch box is to provide a protective, portable means of containing food on the go. So why fill it with so many pre-packaged products? The supermarket shelves bulge and lure with their brightly coloured goodies of convenience, mini packs of crisps, biscuits, fruit, veg. Tempting?

Turn your attention to images of land and water bulging with all that packaging strewn across social media.

Instead, consider the following:

✅ Buy larger packs of the lunchbox items you would normally buy; crisps, crackers, dried fruit, malt loaf, yoghurt, cheese instead of multipacks....they can all be decanted into smaller pots, wrapped in wax or fabric wraps. Or could dry items even just go straight in the lunchbox? This may not eliminate packaging but it reduces it - especially if you are in a position to buy in bulk from a zero waste store.

✅ Schedule a few extra minutes each week to chop up fruit and veg in bulk. Freeze and take out when required. Or store in jars with a little lemon juice in the fridge, to preserve for a few extra days. Make it part of your routine and it will become a habit, not a hassle.

✅ Whizz up some dips and dressings in bulk - hummus, guacamole, sour cream and chive...honey and mustard, balsamic, garlicky tahini and lemon....again, reuse glass jars to make and store them in. If you plan on making some for dinner one night anyway, just make extra.

✅ Popcorn, muffins, granola, flapjacks, 'energy' balls (packed with seeds and dried fruit) are far quicker to make from scratch than you might think. And make a healthier alternative to the stuff boxed up.

If sandwiches are your thing - don't forget bread bags are accepted by Win on Waste, other Terracycle collections and supermarket carrier bag collection points! Unless of course you are in the fortunate position to bake loaves yourself or visit one of the many local bakeries we are lucky to have in Southbourne, that will offer you produce in a paper bag or pop in straight in your own reusable bag.

So just do a quick search of zero waste lunch box ideas via [Ecosia](https://www.facebook.com/ecosia/?ref=gs&__tn__=%2CdK-R-R&eid=ARDapHWZMBG-2WjiFb4RKdt5PtNt0QmVyxG0I13nNYop1FZZlAumufhCWyBo8UZt8aJ7gh24LnUeeqEa&fref=gs&dti=308664193075982&hc_location=group) to find lots of inspiring recipes, lunch plans and other ideas. Or share in the comments below.

Before you know it, you'll develop better lunch box habits that keep you and those you prep them for healthier; your planet healthier; and make you an inspiration to others!