

Foodways Traditions of Northwest Ohio: Composting & Culture

2334-2279 BCE-First written account of compost found during the reign of King Sargon of the Akkadian Dynasty in the Fertile Crescent in Mesopotamia .

234-149 BCE-Marcus Porcius Cato, Roman, described composting in “DeAgi Cultura.”

50 BCE-Cleopatra made worms sacred due to composting abilities.

23-70 CE-Pliny the Elder, Roman naturalist refers to composting in his writing.

1580-Thomas Tussier describes composting in his book, *500 Pointes of Good Husbandrie*.

1787-George Washington constructed a “repository for dung” to cure manure into fertilizer.

1840-Justus VonLiebig, German chemist, wrote “Organic Chemistry in Its Application to Agriculture and Philosophy,” which led to the practice of using chemicals instead of compost on crops.

1940-Sir Albert Howard, British government agronomist, developed the Indore Method for composting. Considered the Father of Modern Composting.

1990s-Environmental Movement

1996-Edible Schoolyard Project-Alice Waters Chez, Panisse Foundation

Composting is the process of turning discarded food and plants into something usable, “healthy dirt” that nourishes the soil for growing plants. It offers a way to recycle rather than add to heaps of trash.

Composting also offers connections—to the environment, the food system, our own food habits, the places we inhabit, and the cultures surrounding our food. Through composting, we can recognize these connections as well as create some excellent gardening materials!

Healthy Dirt Education Project

Composting is a way for children to learn about the cycles of food production, how it is consumed, and how its disposal can affect the environment. Composting also ties us to our own identities, foodways, and eating choices, so that it can be used to teach a range of subjects and concepts.

The Composting Connections Curriculum teaches children how to compost their leftover food, learn about the food cycle, and make some surprising connections along the way.

- *The environment-Composting to strengthens the soil so that healthy plants can grow. Composting also makes us aware of the natural cycles.*
- *The food system-The contemporary food system tends to create a lot of waste. Composting helps make the food system more sustainable.*
- *Healthy eating-Composting can be the basis for learning about nutrition, good eating habits, and healthy lifestyles.*
- *Gardening and cooking skills-Composting and gardening leads to preservation and cooking of harvested foods.*
- *Culture-What we eat and then discard expresses our culture and individuality since what is edible and palatable is defined differently by different cultures and personal experiences. Through composting, we can learn about our local food culture, food as culture (foodways), local history, the contemporary American food system, and other cuisines.*
- *Composting is one small step in recognizing the connections among what we eat, where it comes from, where it goes, and how all of that is tied to our future.*



471 E. Broad St., Suite 1620
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3857/14-
461-7802
614-461-4651 fax
800-293-9774 in-state toll free
E-mail: ohc@ohiohistoricalsociety.org



historical center
& museum
13660 County Home Road • Bowling Green, OH 43402-9563
Phone 419.352.0967 • Fax 419.352.6220
www.woodcountyhistory.org



14890 Otsego Pike
Wapakoneta, Ohio 45349
419-241-0908
www.schoonerfarms.com



PO Box 484 • Bowling Green,
OH 43402
419-393-0204
Larry.L@foodandculture.org

Something to chew on...

What do you think the food left on your plate says about you and your culture? If you lived in a different place, would you be eating different foods—and therefore disposing of different types of food?

Does your food and food waste reflect your value system or beliefs in any way? Does it reflect any of your current circumstances? Or even, your personality? What do you usually do with food waste and leftovers? What do you think your grandparents and great-grandparents did with their food waste? (feed to chickens and pigs? Compost?)

Do you compost? If yes, why? Is it something that you grew up with? Do you use your compost for your garden? Do you have a special compost bin? If no, why not? What are some of the obstacles keeping you from composting?

Can you see ways in which composting can contribute to a healthier food system and healthier environment? Do you think that composting would reduce the amount of trash you throw in the trashcan?

Composting makes “healthy dirt.” Can you see a connection between “healthy dirt” and “healthy food?” Nutrient rich soil, such as what we get from composting, produces more nutrient-rich plants. Would you want to put something into your body that is not good for growing plants? (Think of all the packaging of food that is thrown out. Also, think of the various additives to processed foods.

Recipe:

Build your compost heap in layers:

1. First layer is 200mm (6 inches) of green matter like food waste, crops, or grass clippings.
2. Second layer is 70mm (2 inches) of manure or brown matter (such as dried leaves), which is then covered with a layer of topsoil.
3. The layers are then forked together.

May repeat layers and mix as material becomes available.



Activities

Create a composting system in your home. Track what types of waste you are placing into your compost? Note which meals create the most waste. Does composting affect the amount of waste filling your trash can? Does it change the eating patterns in your family?

Start a composting system in your community and create or donate your composted soil to a community garden. Find a charity or organization to donate your garden's produce to.

Create a composting system, and use text and/or pictures to describe and illustrate the composting process. What are the changes in waste products placed in the composter? What items do you notice change faster or slower than