



EcoThrifty: Cheaper, Greener Choices for a Happier, Healthier Life

Deborah Niemann

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Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without—our grandmothers knew the importance of responsible, thrifty choices. But somewhere along the way we lost our way and succumbed to the belief that we can get everything for next to nothing, have it shipped halfway around the world and then, more often than not, just throw it away.

This consumer binge is taking its toll. Diet and lifestyle-related illnesses are epidemic, our environment is awash in a sea of plastic, our climate is changing, and the cost of everything is skyrocketing with the price of oil. Are we doomed? No. We can make greener, healthier choices, and we can do it while saving money.

Where to start? *Ecofrugal* is packed with simple, practical ideas and recipes to help you:

Make homemade products for cleaning and skin care

Grow your own food and cook more from scratch

Raise your family without lowering your standards

A must-read for anyone who has ever wanted to live a greener life but thought that it would be too expensive, time-consuming, or difficult, this handy, complete guide will show you how small changes can have a huge environmental impact and save you thousands of dollars, all while improving your quality of life.

Deborah Niemann is a homesteader, writer, and self-sufficiency expert. The author of *Homegrown and Handmade: A Practical Guide to More Self-Reliant Living*, she presents extensively on topics including soapmaking, breadbaking, cheesemaking, composting, and homeschooling.

EcoThrifty: Cheaper, Greener Choices for a Happier, Healthier Life Details

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From Reader Review EcoThrifty: Cheaper, Greener Choices for a Happier, Healthier Life for online ebook

Karen says

There are some really good tips here, but nothing groundbreaking. This book would be more useful for someone just beginning to choose more environmentally friendly options, but for someone already fairly aware of their impact, this won't give many new ideas.

Stefanie Bevins says

There were a lot of good tips and tricks in this book on ways to be more eco thrifty. I found it interesting in the food chapters all the references to livestock and meat when obviously the most eco thrifty and ecofriendly choice would be not including slaughter in your diet.

Overall I would recommend this as a book worth browsing through for specific topics outside of the food chapters.

Diana Gotsch says

In someways a confusing book. I'm not sure the Author ever decided who her target audience was. Sometimes the advice was so obvious that it was insulting to the person who was already experienced in trying to live a more thrifty and Eco friendly life. Open a window on cool nights to save on air conditioning for example. In other places she seemed to assume her reader already knew some complex art. She talked at length about the oils you could add to homemade soap to make them special without ever telling you how to make soap.

The book was also poorly organized. Her advice on cleaning can largely be boiled down to two ingredients Vinegar and Baking soda. Instead of repeating those two in talking about different places to be cleaned it would have been simpler to do a chapter on each or even a long paragraph.

At times the advice was not even practical. She includes some recipes to save money. They included one for a lamb dish. Maybe where she lives lamb is a budget meat, here it is considered a luxury one. She also tells us to not take medication for a cold but to not eat or drink dairy products to cut mucus. This is an old wives tale that has been disproved. In fact mucus isn't even the problem. Inflammation of the sinus area is. The chicken soup does help. So she got that right.

When comparing cost she doesn't always compare apples to apples. She tell us Organics really don't cost more by comparing raw produce to packaged, processed food.

This very sad because a better book on this subject could be very helpful.

Carrie says

I agree with other reviewers who said that this book struggles to find an audience. Those who are interested in being more eco-friendly are likely already doing most of what the book suggests, since the advice generally consists of somewhat basic money-saving tips. It gives recommendations like use CFLs, make your own beauty/cleaning products, cook at home, use the library for entertainment, that sort of thing. On the other hand, those who could do with some of the tips are probably not that interested in being eco-friendly.

I also feel that some of the arguments presented in the book for using or not using certain products should have presented a bit more valid research and a bit less exaggeration. There are several places where the author argues that you shouldn't use some types of toothpaste or deodorant because they contain ingredients that are used in products known to be toxic. But logically, you can't conclude from the ingredients' inclusion in a toxic product that the ingredients themselves are toxic. If she had presented scientific research or otherwise less dubious sources that showed the individual ingredients mentioned were toxic, the arguments would have held more weight for me.

Penny Perriguet says

I've used several ideas from this book. I like the recipe for body lotion.

Alannie Marshall says

A very interesting read. Great for if you're starting out with living more sustainably, but it wasn't new information for me. Some great recipes and the like, though.

Cara says

Following her eco-friendly debut, "Homegrown and Handmade: A Practical Guide to More Self-Reliant Living," Niemann continues to offer tips for sustainable living, focusing now on practical ways to be green while saving money. Niemann's suggestions provide earth-conscious, frugal ways to avoid buying toxic products or their expensive alternatives, thereby reducing environmental harm and supporting personal health through informed consumer choices. In every chapter, from food to home to transportation, Niemann includes recipes or other straightforward guidance, along with cost comparisons, to make her ideas accessible and seemingly easy to implement. Because she covers so much territory, some ideas are bound to pique readers' interest, whether wine- or soap-making, gardening, bread baking or clothes swapping parties appeal. A homesteader herself, Niemann does not forgo technology when it provides the cleanest and cheapest option. She acknowledges, for instance, that using a reel mower for lawn care may not be practical for large lawns or busy people, and so she describes the differences between electric- and gas-powered options. Likewise, in her chapter on free stuff, Niemann discusses foraging in parks as well as foraging online. Small testimonials sprinkled throughout the book complement Niemann's encouraging tone, so that her advice does not come across as righteous or preachy, but more like insider tips from an experienced do-it-yourselfer.

Aimee says

I think I've read pretty much all the eco-hints at this point. I'm a die-hard composter. I have switched almost all my cleaning products to eco-friendly ones. There are hardly any incandescent bulbs left in my lighting fixtures, and at this point I'm replacing the CFLs with LEDs. And on and on. Either I'm not hard-core enough to do it (like bringing my own metal flatware to a family picnic in order not to use a plastic fork), or it just isn't realistic for my life!

Jennybeast says

Learned a few interesting and useful tidbits from this book, but it wasn't as engaging or useful as I had hoped. Also, I don't think that the sections where she adds up the cost savings are all that helpful -- either they did not apply to me (I wouldn't be purchasing those things anyway) or the savings did not seem to be all that worthwhile -- the advice was, but that aspect just didn't work for me. Kinds basic, but a good starter on the subject.

Bookish Jen says

With a financial situation that can only be described as “meh” and a desire to be as green as possible, I’m always looking for tips and ideas on how to save some money while also being earth-friendly. Some of the money saving tips I find are way too stringent, the kind you might find on the TLC show “Extreme Cheapskates.” No thanks. I refuse to dumpster dive for medication. And as for being green, there are times when I think the green movement has become too elitist or “yuppie,” like high-end green fashion brands and home accessories. I just can’t fathom buying a tank top that costs almost a third of my monthly rent.

Well, thanks to Deborah Niemann’s latest book *Eco-Thrifty: Cheaper, Greener Choices for a Happier, Healthier Life*, I can I can pay my rent and maintain my desire to be as green as humanly possible.

I first became aware of Ms. Niemann when I profiled her book *Homegrown and Homemade: A Practical Guide to More Self-Reliant Living* and her visit to Milwaukee’s very own Boswell Book Company nearly three years ago. Ms. Niemann lives on a huge homestead and farm in rural Illinois where she and her family a hugely self-sustaining life raising chickens, goats, llamas, and cows. They also have a large garden and orchard. It is from this homestead Ms. Niemann is able to support and take care of her family while being hugely frugal and maintaining an environmentally-sound lifestyle. So needless to say, she is the correct person to write a book on the topics of saving money and caring for the planet.

Eco-Thrifty is divided into 10 easy to follow chapters covering everything from making your own personal care products to how to make products to keep your home spic and span. Niemann also covers cheap ways to be green when it comes to clothing, raising children, feeding your family, maintaining your health, and gardening. *Eco-Thrifty* also tells us how entertaining and transportation can also be green and cheap. And the final chapter informs us to get things for free or almost free. Bonus!

I have to admit I looked forward to reading *Eco-Thrifty*’s chapter on personal care products. I’ve been

making own soap for six years now. Not only am I saving money and not using products with a bunch of scary chemicals I can't pronounce, I'm also having a lot of fun. Making my own soap is another creative outlet. So I was thrilled to read up on recipes on how to make other products like body butter and exfoliating scrubs.

In the chapter on home care, Deborah lets us know how much you can clean with simple vinegar and baking soda (and a little extra elbow grease). You don't have to buy a mess of products from Wal-Mart. She also has a recipe on how to make your own laundry detergent with items you can easily find at you local grocery or drug store.

When it comes to food, Niemann inspires us to trust ourselves in the kitchen. We can save money, be green and get in touch with our inner Julia Child. She extolls the virtues of making things from scratch, including wine. She also encourages us to grow our own food, letting us know that even an urban dweller like myself can grow an herb garden on my window sill (and I'm planning on doing this shortly).

Other green and thrifty ideas include buying things used, holding clothing swap parties, investing in a good pair of gym shoes to go walking around your neighborhood instead of joining a pricey gym and re-purposing and re-using things you might throw out. Many of her ideas you might be using already!

Most of Ms. Niemann's ideas and tips are easy to do and practical. Niemann's writing style is down-to-earth and encouraging. And she knows that not all of her ideas will work for everyone and some may have to be amended to one's particular lifestyle. Sure, she got a bit preachy about not having a television, but perhaps I was feeling some residual Catholic guilt over watching reruns of "Bridezillas" instead of doing something a bit more worthy of my time.

Ultimately, Eco-Thrifty is a must-read primer for anyone who wants to be green and save some green.

Originally published at The Book Self:
<http://thebookselfblog.wordpress.com/...>

AnandaTashie says

It's a 2 for me, but it could earn an extra star for people who don't have much experience with being "green" (?). I found the book to be kind of dry, occasionally preachy, and a tad iffy now and then (for example, suggesting people switch to kitchen oils for lube; though the verdict varies of the true health of that, there's also no mention of what it could do to condoms...).

Fay says

A concise guide to living a frugal "green" life. This book covers every aspect including personal hygiene and entertainment. There are some basic recipes, accounts from experience and gentle encouragement to at least give it a go.

I liked this book because it was inspiring and stimulating. My only complaint - it was written for American

readers, in particular those in Chicago. The comprehensive bibliography section made up for that.

It's a small book, easily read and printed on 100% recycled paper.

Michelle says

I've been reading Deborah's blog since before she published her first book, so I can say that if she sounds preachy to some people, it's because she has the experience and the knowledge to preach about living an EcoThrifty life!

I've read a lot of green living books, and I usually put them down and think, "Well, that sounds great, but I could never do it", but this book is great for someone who wants to find a few simple ways to start incorporating a more environmentally conscious worldview, but in baby steps that aren't overwhelming. Not all of the ideas will apply to all of the people, of course, but I think most people will be able to find a few ideas to take away with them. And then once those first steps are incorporated into a lifestyle, come back to the book and look for some new ones...

Elizabeth says

Inspiring! The author did a great job of stripping away all of my excuses of why I don't do more myself. Her convictions at the beginning, suggestions through the body, and encouragement at the end of the book were just what I needed to begin a plan for eco-improvement!

Samma says

I felt like the author got a holier-than-thou attitude about her writing on the subject at hand. It's perfectly fine to want to be thrifty and to seek out a book --but, she made me glad I didn't pay for this one. Thank god for libraries (...which I don't think she even mentioned as a way to cut costs on books and magazines; instead heading straight for the internet...which may I remind you spendthrifts, is usually available at your local library along with many other wonderful opportunities to save). Also, I felt like certain sections could have had more pictures, and the black-and-white photography made the book feel cheap, which at nearly \$20 I'm sure more than one fellow tightwad said, "No thanks" to.
