

Making Ripples

Green Goodies for the Holidays

by Amanda Bancroft

A long time ago, living a sustainable lifestyle meant that I had to give up delicious goodies at almost every holiday and live as a hypocrite, nibbling on peanut butter pumpkins, Christmas-colored candies, dark chocolate hearts, and mini chocolate eggs in secret.

With my lust for chocolate speeding my fingers across the keyboard, I discovered that there are many options for sustainable holiday goodies, both homemade and store-bought. Some are even healthier! I just learned how to make vegan almond cream cheese frosting to top my pumpkin muffins, using all organic, fair trade ingredients. More expensive? Sorta – in the same way that paying your doctor only 8% of the cost of their services, and then paying them the full market value, would be “more expensive” than before.

Store shelves are a dizzy array of color and global impact. Sugary treats can create conditions for child slavery in Africa, and cause the destruction of important habitat around the world. Other goodies support wildlife and small family farms. Certain chocolate bars focus on the conservation of endangered species, while others focus on creating fair wages for farmers producing the products in cooperatives.

If you want your kids to enjoy trick-or-treating but not learn to crave goodies which should really be called baddies, why not participate in Reverse Trick-or-Treating next year? Costumed trick-or-treaters go door-to-door educating others about child slavery in the chocolate industry, while giving out delicious fair trade chocolates (and eating them, too!). You can join a local charity group, or order a kit from Equal Exchange. It's important to consider fair trade as an aspect of sustainability, because certification requires sustainable farming practices.

On December 2nd at St. Paul's Alternative Gift Market, OMNI Center will be selling fair trade chocolates, coffee and tea to fundraise for their youth summer program. There are also fair trade chocolate bars, hot cocoa or coffee on Sunday mornings at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fayetteville. Schools and clubs are now fundraising with fair trade candy bars and gift baskets.

I don't have to light up my intestines like a Christmas tree with artificial coloring and flavors, consume pesticides, and use slave-produced sugar just to make my house have that seasonal scent of homemade goodies and familiar warmth. Almost any product you can think of to use in your holiday baking exists in a version which doesn't destroy something or abuse children somewhere. Fair trade sugar and vanilla extract gives farmers a fair price for their products, so they can improve the health of their communities.

Green goodies are out there. The trick is to find them, care enough to keep trying, and to forgive yourself – but not give up – if you can't make the switch right away. Check out Ripples for recipe ideas!

Ripples is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling their off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at www.RipplesBlog.org