



"Reduce – Reuse – Recycle"

Mandy Brooks
Recycling Coordinator
Salinas Valley Recycles

Spring Green Celebrations

After the much-needed drenching of rain, new life is emerging in vibrant green all around the Salinas Valley and Central Coast, inviting us to frolic and celebrate spring. Whether you're observing Easter with family, picnicking at Toro Park, or joining friends to watch hoops and eat wings for March Madness – there are many good reasons and smart ways to green your gatherings!

Just like those reusable plastic eggs and Easter baskets, reusing decorations and party gear from year to year means less waste from disposables, and more savings for your wallet (more Peeps)! A one-time investment in reusable picnic ware will deliver years of waste-free parties. Buying items at a second-hand store can further reduce your costs, and your carbon footprint.

The ideal reusable party pack consists of plates, bowls, utensils, cups, and napkins as a start. Going with lightweight dishwasher-safe plastics makes your party pack more portable, and cleanups easier. Even those plastic utensils that everyone disposes after one use work great in the dishwasher (using the utensil basket) and can be washed and reused until they break. Cloth napkins and towels in lively bright colors, pretty pastels for spring or your favorite team colors put you one step ahead to setting a festive scene.

Pack it all into a plastic storage tub so it's always ready when you are. The storage container does double-duty to protect your car from food residue, so you can throw the dirty wares back into the tub for transport, and right to the dishwasher for unloading. Clean, pack and stack away for your next event!

Additions to your reusable party kit might also include placemats, a tablecloth, ice chests or coolers (no Styrofoam, please!), insulated drink dispensers, and containers or foil to send tasty leftovers home with guests. Remember to set a place for recycling, and if you're entertaining out at a park, lake or beach, bring your own trash and recycling bags to pack out, just in case cans are full or missing. After all, piling trash and recycling onto overflowing cans provides the same result as littering, and you'll want your favorite spaces to stay litter-free.

To further prevent litter, avoid the temptation to use helium balloons in your outdoor decorations. Though fun and harmless when tethered, too often those balloons are released to the sky, and what goes up must come down. Try fresh flowers or something reusable instead, to enjoy a bright green spring and many future green celebrations!

