



MEDIA RELEASE

Waste-wise wisdom for the festive season

Immediate Release

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It's that time of the year when many of us go a little crazy giving loads of gifts and indulging in far too much food. The Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa (IWMSA) would like to give everyone some waste-wise advice this festive season, to reduce their environmental impact by looking for ways to minimise the amount of household waste which is eventually diverted to landfill.

“During the festive season we produce a lot of waste from packaging, food wrappers, old decorations and even unwanted gifts. We are also likely to produce far too much food for end of year parties and Christmas dinners, not to mention treats for guests who come to visit. With a fridge stuffed to the brim, that extra party food which is not consumed is often thrown into the garbage bin too,” says Jan Palm, President of the IWMSA. “Unfortunately, Southern Africa is running out of landfill airspace and so we all have a responsibility to be waste-wise by correctly sorting and disposing of our waste. You can be waste-wise this festive season by considering alternative ways to dispose of unwanted gifts and food.”

The IWMSA has identified the best waste-wise tips to get you through the festive season:

1. Find a charity that is collecting food

Look for a Non-Profit Organisation in your area that is collecting and redistributing food this festive season. A handy website to help you find a charity that is nearest to you is www.giveback.co.za or www.forgood.co.za. “There are many people less fortunate than ourselves who would love to enjoy eating delicious Christmas party leftovers. So instead of throwing it away, call ahead to a charity and ask if they would appreciate receiving your leftover food. You're bound to feel good when you take time to do this and the simple act of helping others will be most rewarding. The added bonus, is that the extra food doesn't end up in your rubbish bin,” says Palm.

2. Give food parcels to homeless people

“There are many people who live on the street, who spend their days begging on the side of the road and often go to sleep hungry. Christmas Day isn't any different for them. Why not take left over food from your Christmas meal and give it to the underprivileged people in your community?” suggests Palm. “Another

alternative is to take your leftover food to the nearest police station or hospital where you can treat the staff who are hard at work over the holiday period. It's a nice way of thanking them for the valuable work they do."

3. Compost your food waste

Create your own compost to spread over flower beds in your garden using uncooked fresh produce like vegetable peels. You can add egg shells, tea bags and coffee granules to your compost bin. "Remember to combine grass clippings and leaves from your garden with the food waste, not forgetting to turn the material to allow air in which will help it to break down quicker. There are numerous benefits to composting organic waste as it produces mulch, soil amendments and organic fertilisers," explains Palm. You can take composting a step further by building your own worm farm to make the richest organic fertiliser for your garden. Worm farms are odourless and don't take up a lot of space, and therefore you can keep it inside. For an easy guide to building your own worm farm visit <http://bit.ly/2i0ImMa>.

4. Give away unwanted gifts

Instead of throwing away gifts that you don't want, consider who might enjoy owning them. "Perhaps the trinkets in your Christmas cracker could be given to children who wouldn't normally receive toys at Christmas? Or perhaps you can donate clothing items you don't want to a charity," says Palm.

5. Return and exchange gifts you do not want

Consider returning gifts to the shop where they were bought and request a refund or exchange. Palm explains, "Set a trend in your family and encourage others to cross out prices on gifts, but leave tags on so that they can be returned if the receiver doesn't want it, this is a simple way to ensure gifts don't go to waste."

6. Give gifts in gift bags that can be reused

"Using gift bags instead of wrapping paper and sticky tape makes environmental sense, because there's no need to drop off paper at a recycling depot. A gift bag can easily be folded flat and stored away, ready to be reused next Christmas," says Palm.

7. Be ready to collect wrapping paper for recycling

"Everyone has a tradition of opening gifts with friends and family, be it on Christmas Eve, first thing on Christmas Day or when friends arrive at your home to celebrate. Get ready to collect as much wrapping paper for recycling by having a large bag close at hand when the gifts are unwrapped. Encourage the younger children to be Santa's little helpers and make a game of collecting all the wrapping paper so that all of it ends up in your recycling bin," says Palm.

"Now is a perfect time to reconsider how we dispose of waste. We encourage everyone to approach this Christmas with the mindset of a Waste-Wise Warrior, by diverting waste away from landfills," concludes Palm.

To find your nearest recycler, visit www.mywaste.co.za. To find a waste management supplier, visit www.allwastesolutions.co.za.

For more information on the IWMSA, visit www.iwmsa.co.za. The IWMSA is also on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/IWMSA>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/iwmsa>). For more information on recycling and recovery, visit the National Recycling Forum's website at www.recycling.co.za.

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