

ideas



STYLEMAKER

A champion of *earth-friendly living*, television personality Sara Snow knows that going green starts at home. Follow her lead for a down-to-earth get-together.

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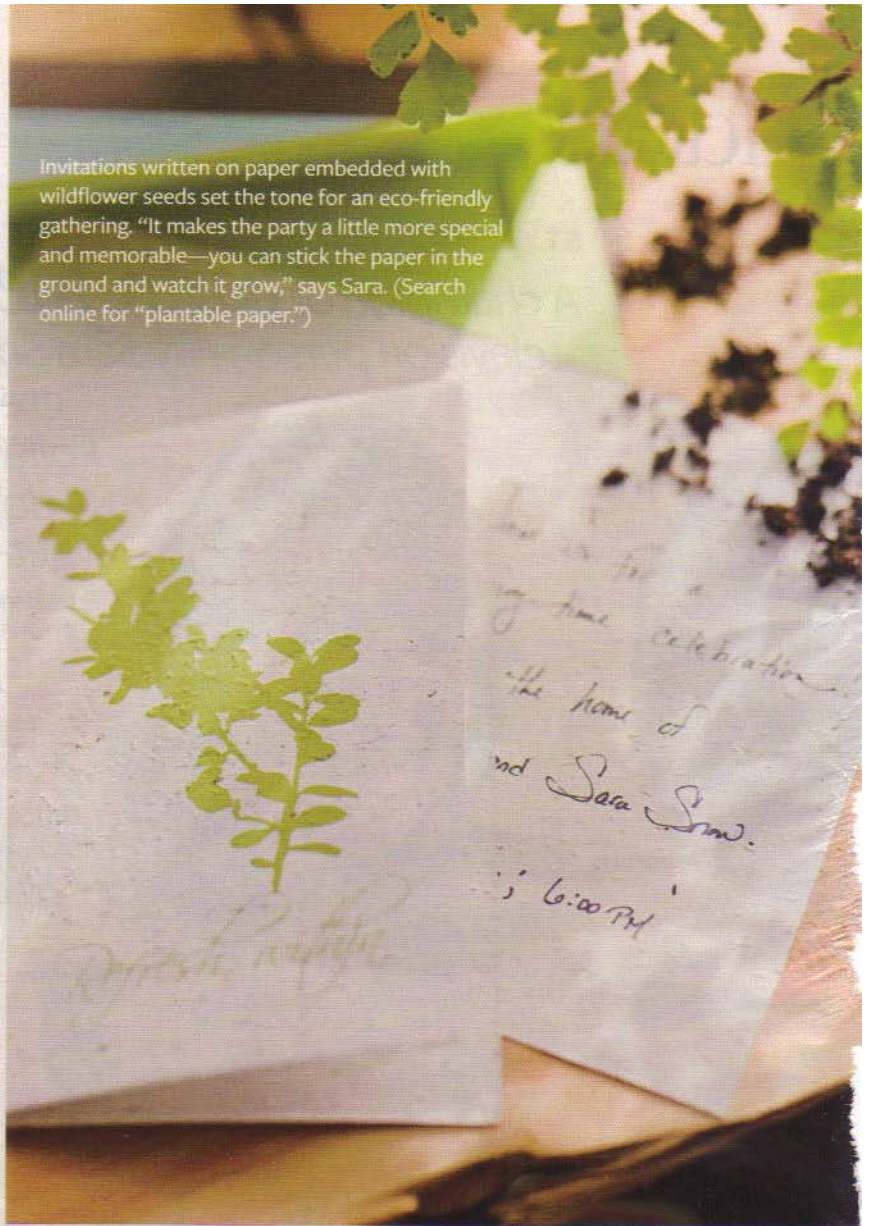
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Just minutes before guests

arrive in her Indianapolis home, Sara Snow remains a vision of calm. Potted herbs she uses for cooking have been pulled onto tables for easy centerpieces, and a bag of prewashed organic greens fills a bowl on the kitchen counter. For the rising queen of living green—Sara hosts two Discovery Network shows—the secret to entertaining is simplicity. “Keeping things simple means you’re not feeling crazed when guests arrive,” she says. And a party lets her showcase her philosophy. Having grown up in the ‘80s in a rural Michigan house with solar panels and big organic

gardens, Sara soaked up early lessons. Her mom didn’t forbid her from eating a sugary brownie, but she did ask that Sara pay attention to how it made her body feel. “That taught me to really respect food and recognize that it’s more than just something that fills our bellies,” Sara says. Today, Sara wants people to find their own balance in how they eat, decorate, and entertain. “Rather than tell people they need to change how they live, I prefer to let them see how easy it is to incorporate new habits into daily life,” she says. “I want people to feel encouraged to try something new rather than be guilted into making changes.”

Invitations written on paper embedded with wildflower seeds set the tone for an eco-friendly gathering. “It makes the party a little more special and memorable—you can stick the paper in the ground and watch it grow,” says Sara. (Search online for “plantable paper.”)



Potted herbs are conversation-starting centerpieces. A swish of chalkboard paint on each pot makes an easy-to-change label.



Mismatched plates from thrift stores keep the party casual. “They’re an alternative to disposable plates, which create a lot of waste,” Sara says. “At 25 cents apiece, you could even donate them right back.”



Sara’s recycled cotton bags are party favors; she figures guests can never have enough. “I shove all my bags into one that I take to the store.”

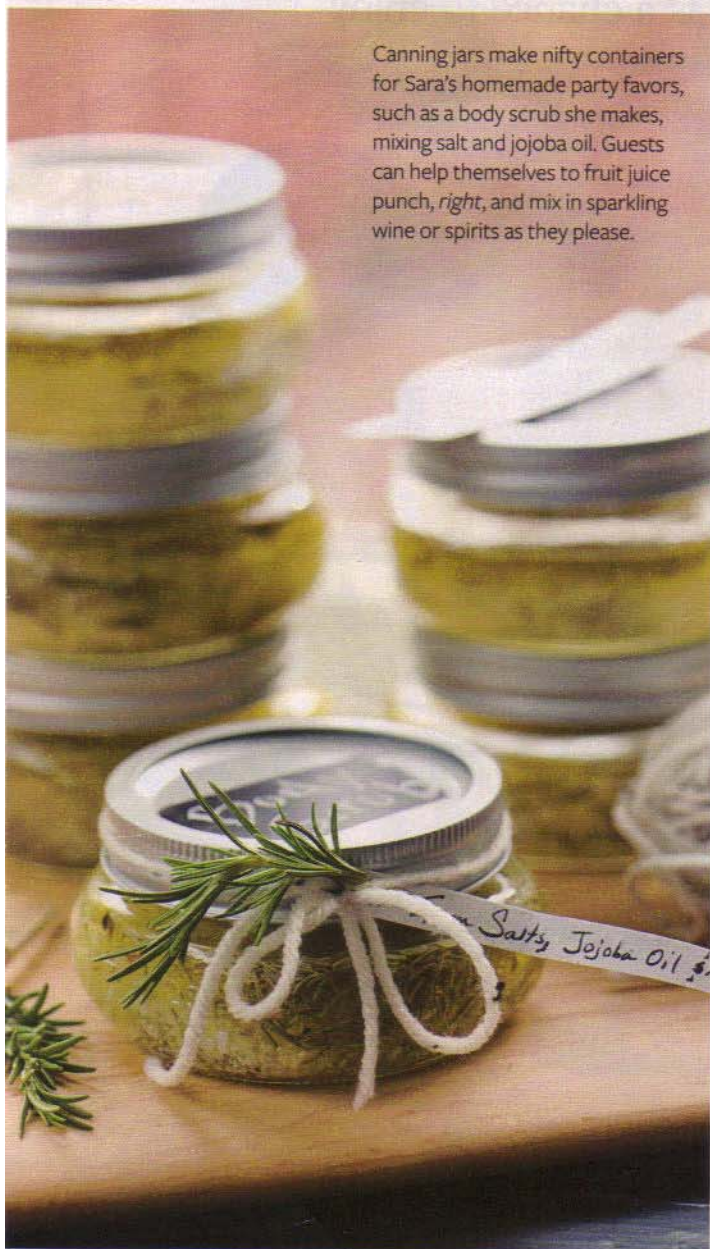
Guests don't expect a five-course meal. For me, throwing a party is a chance to enjoy family and friends. SARA SNOW



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Canning jars make nifty containers for Sara's homemade party favors, such as a body scrub she makes, mixing salt and jojoba oil. Guests can help themselves to fruit juice punch, *right*, and mix in sparkling wine or spirits as they please.



"Think about where you want guests to congregate, then place beverage and food stations there," Sara says. That includes placing recycling bins front and center, so that no one need hunt through the kitchen to do the right thing.

"When I'm planning a menu, I think of foods that also might inspire people to try them on their own," Sara says. "A simple pasta dish with locally grown tomatoes and basil doesn't cost much, and it works for guests who don't eat meat." She's doesn't overdo dessert, either, opting for "just something people can take little nibbles on, like fair-trade chocolate and fruit."

Spring through fall, weekly produce deliveries from a local CSA (go to localharvest.org for locations of community supported agriculture outlets) ease the shopping time crunch. "You never know what you're going to get from week to week, so it encourages you to

try different foods," Sara says. In grocery stores, she shops the organic section. "Organic tends to cost more, so I encourage people to look at it as an investment in their family's or guests' health," she says. She recommends choosing organic for items that, when grown conventionally, tend to have the most pesticides, such as peaches and apples, but sticking with conventional for produce that you'll peel, such as onions. (Go to foodnews.org for more information.) And she gives special thought to beverages, offering a variety of juices and sparkling waters to mix and match. "The first thing you hand a guest is a drink," Sara says.

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It's all about creating new habits. A small change, like remembering to take cloth bags to the store, will eventually become second nature.

For Sara, entertaining is an opportunity to educate. "The things in my house can serve as a learning tool for a green lifestyle," she says. She and her husband, Ryan, restored their 1920s house by scouring salvage shops to replace missing tiles, adding denim insulation, choosing solid-wood products over manmade, and finding new uses for ripped-out fixtures. (The old kitchen cabinets found second life in the basement.) "We essentially took a very old home and recycled it," Sara says.

Smaller eco-friendly touches run throughout her home, from

all-natural cotton throw rugs to the rice-hull vases filled with herbs. During parties, Sara pulls recycling bins to the heart of the kitchen, where guests gather. "It makes it really easy for guests and easy for me, since the cleanup and sorting is already done," she says. And when sending home leftovers, she grabs a casserole dish the guest can return at her convenience rather than a plastic container.

"We've gotten so used to disposability and waste," she says. "But if we just take a step back and consider how things used to be done, we see a really good model for how we should live today."

THE NEXT STEP

Eco Read **Ease into green with this room-by-room tome**



EMPHASIZING THE EASY,

Sara Snow's new book is filled with practical ways to go green. In *Fresh Living: The Essential Room-by-Room Guide to a Greener, Healthier Family and Home* (Bantam, 2009), Sara turns lessons from her own life into ideas on doing laundry, decorating, introducing kids to healthy eating—even greening the garage. She walks the

perimeter of the grocery store, where the most nutritious foods tend to be located, and equips an all-around-the-house cleaning kit with baking soda, lemon juice, and vinegar. A "second-generation organic" (her father, Tim Redmond, founded the natural foods company Eden Foods), Sara also hosts Discovery Network's *Living Fresh* and *Get Fresh with Sara Snow*. 