



Zero waste life

CHALLENGER: KAT

TASK: Create as minimal waste as possible

## Day one

A week ago, I started a 21-Day Challenge. The premise of the challenge is to see what Zero-Waste life is like. The rules of my challenge are simple, they included: not purchasing any product that creates waste, not generating free-waste, as well as, collecting any waste I inevitably acquire beyond my own control. Exceptions include: using products or food that I already have, and if that is not possible, then purchasing items of which packaging must be recyclable and I can accept gifts. I chose this challenge because waste bothered me. I want to know what I can do on an individual level to stop it.



Pizza pick up without the usual packaging!

Today I took a look at all the waste that I inevitably collected from products I already had before the challenge started. I was surprised at what waste I had already! I had various things, contact lenses, broken elastics, glass jars from cooking oils, price-tags from clothes bought, wax paper used in markets to wrap cheese, just to name a few. I sat for a moment looking at the waste on the floor and then looked around the room. I have so much waste! I thought and I looked at my possessions and acknowledge that over time most of my possession would one day be waste too, was all of my home waste? The plants those guys are good stuff, they aren't waste, but the plastic containers some of them are in are. /

## Day twenty one

One of the struggles I am having is with food. Normally I buy a lot of chips. I cannot buy chips. Chips are in non-recyclable bags. I made my own chips. They were not the same. Normally I buy organic. I cannot buy organic, organic food is wrapped in plastic to protect it from contamination with other vegetables. I buy loose vegetables from farmers markets and mom and pop shops. I need grains, nuts, cereals to make a balanced diet. I cannot buy these in recyclable plastic bags. There is no bulk shop in Aalborg. I went to Copenhagen to buy in a bulk store. That was expensive to travel to another city to buy food.

The Zero-Waste challenge is coming to an end and I wonder what changed about me through this process. I learned that it is very complex trying to be both sustainable, eat organic and properly dispose of waste. Mostly I have a challenge composting in Aalborg. I have resorted to guerilla composting (i.e. throwing organic wastes like orange peels in parks) and picking up trash in return. I had victories too. My greatest day was when I ordered take-away pizza without a box. ;)

I learned that I can make a difference and I will continue to make strides to a zero-waste life. It's rewarding, good for my pal Planet Earth and often just requires a little planning.

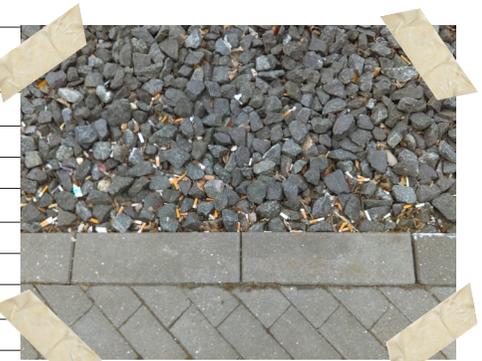


## Day one

Sadly, my challenge starts right outside my doorstep, where many cigarette smokers have decided to accumulate the cigarette butts on a pebbled area in front of the car parking. So, I realized that there are tons of cigarette butts right outside my apartment that has been piling up and no one has been bothered to clean it up or place cigarette bins in that area. Interesting aspect of my behavior was that, before this challenge I did not care about these cigarette butts despite the fact that they have always been there. Now that it has become my responsibility to clean it up, they have become rather visible! (and my contempt towards smokers has risen also!) While I was picking up these butts a guy was smoking next to me and I noticed he was looking at what I was doing, crouching on the ground. I noticed he felt uncomfortable to throw the butt away in front of my sight so he left with his cigarette butt after he was done.

I realized that on my usual bike ride to school in the morning, how apparent the rubbish on the street has become now that I'm doing this challenge. They were invisible before, but now they are not. If I had to stop and pick up all the rubbish I saw on the way to school, I will ALWAYS be late for class. Which really goes to show, how selective our minds are. If I don't want to see it, then I WON'T see it. Aalborg is not as clean as I thought it was now that I've started this challenge. It really highlighted people's behavior of not caring about who is cleaning up after us.

Rubbish thrown away by people after Aalborg Karneval



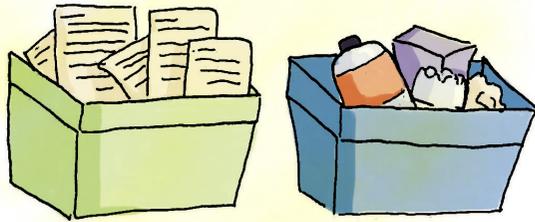
Cigarette butts outside my apartment

## Day twenty one

I've noticed how people's behavior in throwing away rubbish is also quite seasonal. During the heatwave in Denmark, many people utilized the good weather to have BBQs in the park. There were so many disposable plastic cutlery, cups and plates that would spill over the full bins and get blown away by the wind. Also, no one seemed to be bothering to recycle the rubbish as these "restaffald" bins were full of them.

Then the Aalborg Karneval happened. And due to my challenge, I could not help but see the amount of waste that was carelessly thrown away. There did not seem to be any alternative other than throwing things away on the ground. I saw so much glitter and small plastic particles that went into the stormwater system that would eventually end up in the Limfjords. The amount of rubbish created on the streets especially the discarded baby prams looked like a scene from an apocalyptic sci-fi movie. It made me think, is this linking this kind of behavior with something that is fun? Could that possibly leave an unintended psychological imprint in our brains that throwing rubbish away anywhere is a symbol of fun? Or more interestingly, could throwing rubbish away in the correct bins be something that can be fun and cool?

I have not been able to switch off my enhanced rubbish radar, so I will definitely be continuing my habit after this challenge.



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CHALLENGER: ANDERS

TASK: Sorting my waste at home and recycling as much as possible

## Day one

To be honest, I have never before made a proper effort to sort my trash, so I am at ground zero of trash sorting. My incentives for finally beginning to do so, are due to the fact that Aalborg Municipality supports trash sorting actively, by placing separate bins in many residential courtyards, and as a general incentive that is in the best interest for the planet - a matter of collective responsibility. I devised a sophisticated trash sorting system in my small city kitchen: a plastic bag for plastics and metal, standing freely and openly in the kitchen; and a general pile for my papers. I also, finally, signed up for the Danish reklamer "nej tak" sticker, which ensures a no-junk-mail-mailbox, meaning a lot less paper waste.

Speaking of paper waste, I felt a little bit silly when I first took the tea bag wrappings and put them in the paper pile. But after a while, the piles increased, and **I realised sorting didn't take extra time.**

## Day twenty one

Today I was taking out my separated accumulated trash for the first time. I noticed a couple of days ago that there was a note on one of the bins in the courtyard. The note explained how the renovation service had not emptied the bin due to faulty sorting. As I checked it out, I saw that there was a lot of cardboard in the plastics and metal bin. Today, however, I saw the maintenance guy of my building going through all the bins to sort out the issue. Color-coded stickers were also put on the bins.

I hope it helps, because **when somebody messes up the system, the motivation for everybody else goes down.** I had people over for food tonight, and a lot of different trash developed in the process of cooking for 6 people. For example, I had my doubt as to whether I needed to sort the dirty chicken tray with plastic, or whether it should be in restaffald since it has been contaminated. I consulted ret.nk.dk, the Aalborg Municipality renovation service, and found that they indeed belong with the plastics. Lesson learned! It also negated my childish attempt to make dirty a plastic tray for kiwis earlier today by putting the peels in the tray to avoid sorting the items. Not proud.



Sorting bins outside my house

My friends were actually pretty positive about my new behaviour. They questioned why I would want to have an open bag of trash in my kitchen, so I want to come up with a clever solution that is easy to use, and a lot more nice to look at.

I realised that in the end, sorting out my trash was not a hard task at all, and also the consequence of ruining the system for everyone as it was important that everyone did it properly.



Sorting bins inside my house

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*The art of sorting*

CHALLENGER : MICHELLE

TASK : Sorting my waste at home and recycling as much as possible

*Day one*

I live in a student residency, and almost every-day, I'm faced with trash covering the ground and garbage bags left around the trash cans. I notice that most of this trash could have been sorted in one way or another, and it breaks my heart, thinking about all the resources that have gone to waste and the impact this will have on our earth. I wish more people were conscious about the connection between our actions and choices to climate change. Before taking up the waste-sorting challenge, I already felt that I actively made a lot of conscious choices on this particular area. Upon taking the challenge, I was faced with the reality that there are so many more things to sort other than just paper and cardboard.



2 different types of plastics in 1 product

The problem is, that I don't have separated bins for the different types of waste, therefore there was trash all over my apartment in small separated divisions. The sorting bins are not on my normal route to work, so they ended up piling up pretty quick especially when I was sorting everything into the smallest sections.

*Day twenty one*

People think I'm a little crazy, tearing product packaging apart for sorting and even envelopes to be sorted into different sections. One of my friends helped me carry down all the piles of sorted rubbish on my floor to the bins today. When I started taking off the metal lids of the glass bottles, jars and wine bottles to sort them into to the Metal/Plastic bin, she looked at me and said, I NEVER thought of it that way. I had no idea that you should do that.

People messing up the bins outside my house



I have become much more aware of what different components products are from, and how to separate them correctly so that all the components will be reused as best as possible.

Furthermore, I got a better understanding of which products are easier and better to recycle (for example, the different types of plastics with its different recycling capacity, or buying food in glass jars when possible instead of plastic packaging). Therefore, I will continue to sort my waste, because of my new and developed understanding of these different components.



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CHALLENGER: ANDREA

TASK: Being on a vegan diet.  
No animal products of any kind.

### Day one

Finally, I arrived home and prepared my own first vegan dish and it was DELICIOUS! Also, I equipped my fridge with some lovely veggies, non-dairy milk, etc. so the dinner went smoothly. Chilling with myself at home being vegan is not hard at all, but one thing is sure, veganism is tough when living in a small city like Aalborg where there is almost no vegan fast-food options. The funniest thing is that strength you need to saying no to non-vegan food even though you are super hungry and craving for anything. That power of being able to say NO felt so good, and if I wasn't committed to completing this challenge I'm sure I would never have been able to do it. Therefore, this challenge was very inspirational and motivational for me and I got to learn many new things about myself. How beautiful is that? And oh, yes if you ask me what was the toughest moment of my vegan diet challenge, I definitely recall one - saying no to Nutella. O M G!!!



Yummy vegan snacks!

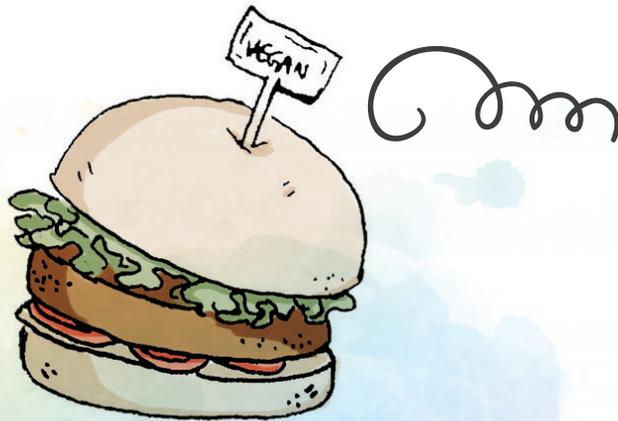
### Day twenty one

Vegan challenge has been for me, so far so good! It has been a crazy 21-day ride, but it has been such a wonderful experience. I've always strived to become vegan, but I'd always failed due to the lack of persistence. This time, as a part of a INGA group, I managed to pull off!! And the best of all is that today I'm still continuing with the vegan diet. Not always succeeding, but I'm definitely working on it. One of our friends had a goodbye party and we spent the whole afternoon chilling on a friend's rooftop, drinking beers and enjoying the sun. At some point we got some goodies from Netto and I made delicious vegan curry with potatoes, broccoli, spinach, and coconut milk. Yummy!! It felt so good to share that beautiful moment with beautiful people.

Vegan breakfast on the terrace



After a few days I came to the realisation, being vegan without past experience was tough! I went to the university to get some things done and when it was time to grab something to eat from the canteen, I expected, or as far as I can remember, that they always have this vegan hummus sandwiches on offer, but today that wasn't the case. I couldn't find anything vegan except raw vegetables in the salad section and that was just not enough to satisfy my hunger. I had no other options but to leave and search for my vegan dish somewhere else.



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CHALLENGER: DOMINIK

TASK: Being on a vegan diet.  
No animal products of any kind.

## Day one

I started the challenge without really preparing for it and without thinking about the things I was allowed to eat. Day 1 therefore started off with a more or less an empty fridge. Based on what I could find at home, breakfast was cooked oats with peanut butter, something that I was already used to eating before whenever I ran out of milk. Since I hadn't prepared anything there were no options for taking out food from home for half a day at university. My solution was rather simple and included me tactically starving myself for the next 6 hours.

Today day was one of the most beautiful days Alborg had seen in a long time, and on my way home I drove passed an ice cream shop that was pouring out happy customers with huge, delicious ice cream cones by the second. Only 14 hours after my challenge had started, it challenged my perseverance severely at this sight. Combining all my will power, I quickly drove past the shop, whilst a silent tear escaped my eye :( Next, I thought it was time to do my first vegan grocery shopping. My first finding was that it took me much longer than usual, since I had to google-translate what felt like 1000 different ingredients that sounded like they could contain some form of animal product. I ended up buying soy based minced meat, something that I used to make fun of before I began this challenge, and I would have never thought I would buy myself. My prejudices were confirmed as my fake Spaghetti Bolognese was a somewhat confusing experience. The meal itself tasted okay but having the real deal in mind, the fake version was just not the same. Note to self: Trying to get over the absence of meat by eating some processed plant substitute is not cutting it!



Vegan burger... not the same but still nice

This afternoon, my friends planned a grill and chill in the park and at first I thought that it would be difficult to participate in this event. However, preparing myself with a mix of grill vegetables and salad including asparagus, eggplant and mushrooms, I felt ready for the challenge. In the end it was much easier than I expected, only the grilled cheese was calling my name.

In the evening there was a farewell party of one of my friends. The super surprising thing was that these lovely people actually adjusted to my challenge and prepared 50% vegan dishes for the party. To get this kind of support from my friends was a really great feeling and my challenge inspired other people to partly change their diet from time to time which was also great to experience. It was largely due to sharing many delicious vegan recipes with my friends that surprised a lot of them, in particular the more sceptical ones towards veganism. Although, these 21 days helped me to see that changing my food habits was possible despite its challenges. However, I will not give up on regular ice cream and real spaghetti, but I will definitely reduce my meat and dairy intake!

## Day twenty one

On day two I found out that you can get Oreos cookies that are vegan. This brightened up the day significantly. First thing I did was to get a large pack of Oreos and to devour them all in a record of 15 minutes.



## Day one

Today was a challenging day since I had a lot of deadlines and this diet makes me realize how much food is connected to emotions and social occasions. In times of stress, I always want chocolate next to coffee, however, affordable chocolates are not vegan since milk is added. In the afternoon, I planned to meet up with my group members at the university and a group member brought cake to make our project work easier. I managed to stick to the carrots and other veggies that I brought with me. I had overcome my weakness for the sweets, so it felt great but it was hard to reject cake!



Eating vegan meals with good friends

## Day twenty one

Although my eating routine was pretty sustainable before the challenge (I basically did not eat fish and meat at home and barely cheese and eggs), but the main challenge of this veganism was the inflexibility when I had dinner with friends. Today, I ate again with friends and I had to ask if every dish was vegan. Unfortunately, they were not, which meant that I could only eat my own dish. The interesting aspect about this challenge is how discussions around my challenge ignited curiosity among my friends. For example, they asked me motives of becoming vegan for this challenge, the potential impact one makes as a climaterian, vegan and/or vegetarian. However, I did not like myself constantly questioning the ingredients of all the dishes, made by friends. This inflexibility and constant checking to ensure the beers did not contain honey, or if the liquorice did not contain pig gelatin and if the bread is not made with eggs etc. did not give me positive energy. From my perspective, living with these eco-principles limited my desires. A stressful day like today, I wish it wasn't a strict vegan day even though in general I live a pretty low-impact life. Therefore, my takeaway from this challenge is that I will continue to live a low-impact life with my food choices, but I realised flexibility was important in order for me to feel happy with my lifestyle.



Vegan grocery shopping



Vegan breakfast, healthy and nutritious



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CHALLENGER: TATIANA

TASK: Changing from vegetarian diet to vegan

## Day one

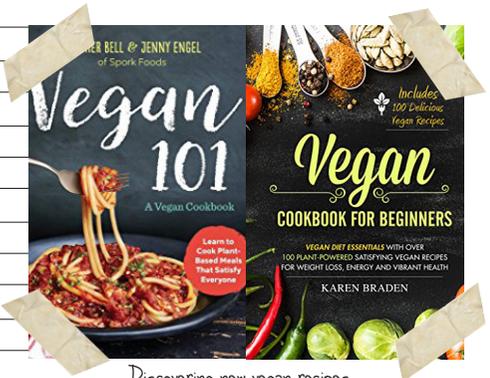
Today it was a hard day for my challenge since I had a dinner with my friends who do not follow a vegan diet. I am already the only vegetarian amongst my friends, so usually when we get together to have dinner, they usually decide to join me on my vegetarian journey and have a vegetarian dish. I enjoy it since I have the opportunity to show them that you don't need meat to enjoy a really nice meal. However, **I am still a beginner in the vegan journey so I did not have a proper delicious vegan recipe to try** to convince them. Furthermore, they told me that for them, leaving meat aside is okay, but vegan is too extreme. I ponder if they were right or not and realized that a vegan diet is no more or less extreme than a vegetarian diet but rather different.

It is hard to choose packaged goods such as cookies, cakes and even sometimes, bread, but we were not supposed to be eating them in the first place. I decided not to argue with my friends, since I think they are already taking a big step by removing meat from the meals we have together, and realize that this also happened when I first embarked on my vegetarian journey and was not 100% sure what to do. Sure, there is a lot of recipes and ideas on the internet, but I never was one to follow orders and steps. Over the years I changed, not only my diet, but my way of thinking into being vegetarian.

As now I have more confidence in my vegetarian cooking skills and I can even create new and delicious vegetarian recipes according to what's available and my friends have developed more enthusiasm in eating vegetarian meals when we eat together. I guess learning how to cook appropriate dishes is part of changing your diet, has a learning curve. I will gather the same confidence from when I transitioned to being a vegetarian to learn great vegan dishes to influence my friends to have a vegan dinner together.

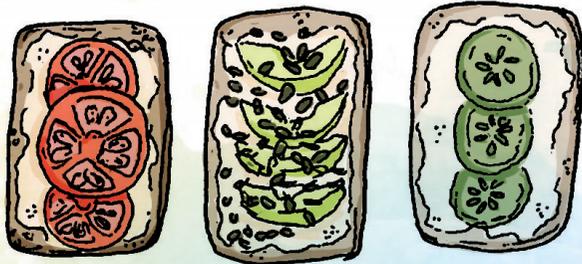
## Day twenty one

Today is the last day of the challenge. I am happy and sad at the same time. One of the key challenges throughout the whole 21 days was eating out. I went to the street food in Aalborg



Discovering new vegan recipes

and most of the vendor's didn't even know what being a vegan meant. I realised the challenges that I found while trying to have a vegan diet were very similar to when I embarked on my vegetarian diet journey in the past. At first I was also lost on what food to eat, what food to cook and what food to buy. **One of the positive takeaways from this challenge is that I started to read the product ingredients again.** I used to do it when I first became vegetarian since my major goal was to have an overall healthier life. I would often read the amount of sugar and salt of products and depending on that, I would decide whether to buy it or not. As a result, most of the food I would buy were fresh vegetables and fruits. It reminded of my grandma that always said that any food that lasts more than 3 days is not good food. In conclusion, my takeaway from this challenge is that this 21 days were hard, but that's because I am changing habits that are embedded in my body and brain. It is hard because we humans don't like change and we usually don't put food as one of our daily priorities. When we are stressed (as I was), we want something fast and something familiar to us, something that make us feel homey, safe and hygge. Putting more effort on choosing what to eat should not be a chore but rather part of our daily life. It is hard at first, but just like learning to swim, changing your diet takes time, so we need to be patient.



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CHALLENGER: DANIELLA



TASK: Being a vegetarian during Monday to Friday only

### Day one

So I have just started my weekday vegetarianism challenge for the next 21 days - meaning that only on weekends I allow myself to eat meat. I was very excited to see if I could keep up with the challenge. The reasons behind my choice of the challenge is to show an example how being more conscious and practicing a little adjustment in our lifestyle can result in a huge impact on our so-called ecological footprint on this planet. And why is this important? Not only because we would like the future generations to enjoy the same conditions that our nature provides, but because we would like for ourselves to have the same possibilities that we had yesterday. And in order to reach that, there is only one possible way, which is to change our lifestyle and our everyday habits. Thus, I am really excited to face all the obstacles that this challenge presents.



Home made vegetarian pizza

On the very first day I am open to discover new options in my diet, to discover how it is actually possible to not build your meals around meat but to enjoy the huge variety of vegetables on our plate. So let's start this 21-day journey.

And I must say it worked very well, and I even managed to make my roommates to join me without any additional meat elements in the meal. I take it as a success!

So despite some struggles and hard times, my aim is to continue my challenge as part of my lifestyle, and realize that, even if you really like meat-based meals - it is okay to eat some meat but you really don't need to do it every single day, you just simply don't need it.

### Day twenty one

I have been doing this challenge for quite some days now, and now I am experiencing the real tough side of the challenge. First of all, it is always really difficult to say NO. To say no to your roommates who are making a deliciously smelling lasagne on a Wednesday evening, to say no to the smiling hamburgers on the street when you are really craving for some juicy bites. To explain and defend your values and most of all to be honest with yourself was difficult. To keep going with your challenge when you know the only person you need to prove is yourself! And why? Because this is the responsibility you take, and every single person should take for our common good.

So I hope my challenge can show an example for those who are not able to fully commit to a vegetarian or vegan diet like me, but you can realize the huge impact that we make together by not eating that piece of meat every day!

Especially today, I have kind of exploited all my veggie recipes but I still need to create something tasty and fulfilling for today. Thus, I am experimenting with some new quiche recipes - because it's one of the best meals when you can perfectly replace some chicken with colourful veggies.



Weekend meat day dish