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When I read about this challenge in the morning, I loved the idea behind it. What a great concept, to force people to confront the waste they produce rather than tossing it in a bin and thinking it just “goes away”. I was excited to carry around the waste I produced, though somewhat grossed out thinking about the food that would entail.

My breakfast was oatmeal (that I had gotten from the bulk section at the co-op I go to with an old container I brought) with maple syrup (in a recyclable glass container) and brown sugar (also bulk). I also had some tea, which I saved to be brewed again the following day. No waste there!

Before my first class, I went to the coffee shop on campus that I go to every Monday and Wednesday morning to get some soup. Today I remembered to bring my Klean Kanteen insulated food canister, pictured to the left. Note: the soup is vegan lentil chili! I ate it with my reusable Light My Fire spoon-fork-knife, which was wrapped in a beeswax wrap to keep it cleaner than it would be if it were just loose in my backpack. The only waste I produced as a result of this snack was a napkin, but that will be composted, so I don't think it counts as waste.



After my first class, I went to the dining hall for lunch. I had a vegan lentil slider, broccoli, most of a beet burger, and an apple. I took the apple core back to my room and put it in a bowl to be added to my compost container when I got another one. Lunch was tasty, but it had an unpleasant aftertaste, so I had two Lifesavers, which were individually wrapped. The waste from lunch was the part of the beet burger I didn't eat, but which I couldn't bring back to my room to compost, and the Lifesaver wrappers. Fortunately, the dining hall composts the food scraps left on plates before they are washed.

For a snack before my next class, I ate a nectarine. I put the pit in the bowl my apple core was in for composting later.

Dinner was a veggie burger, which came in a compostable clamshell. Now I'm using the clamshell as a compost container for the napkin, apple core, nectarine pit, and future compostables. After dinner, I had a piece of gum, creating my second true waste item of the day.

Throughout the day, I used my reusable water bottle and reusable coffee cup for the water and tea I drank. I avoided single-use cutlery by carrying around my own. I'm pleased that the only non-recyclable, non-compostable waste I generated in a day was the Lifesaver wrappers and gum. That said, there is still room for improvement. I could buy mints in a reusable or recyclable container to get rid of bad aftertastes and freshen my breath instead of what I did today. Looking on the internet, I found that there are also zero waste gum options, but they may be more expensive than a tin of Altoids.

Since I didn't generate enough waste for people to notice me carrying it around, I did not strike up any conversations about it, but I did talk briefly with the cashier at the coffee shop where I got my soup in my Klean Kanteen. As I was paying, she commented on my canister. Unfortunately, it was busy at the time so I didn't have the opportunity to tell her why I got it, where I got it, and really converse about waste, but maybe just seeing it will have planted a seed in her head.

Here is all the waste I generated in 24 hours. The compostables are on the bottom half on the clamshell, as well as the clamshell, and the garbage is in the top half. Not bad, if I do say so myself.



This challenge addresses the waste that can be made in a day, but there are non-compostable, non-recyclable things in my life that I don't regularly use and throw away. One example is the sponge I occasionally use to wash dishes. Once it is used up, I plan on getting a compostable alternative. Another area for improvement is personal care. I've been phasing out my plastic personal care items, switching to a safety razor, bamboo toothbrush, getting shampoo and conditioner bars, and so forth, but I still haven't made the switch for deodorant, toothpaste, and a hairbrush. The primary reason I haven't done these things is because I have several tubes (is that the right word?) of partially-used deodorant, a couple tubes of toothpaste, and a good hairbrush with plenty of life left in it. But when those things run out, I'm still not sure I'd be comfortable making the switch. Plastic-free deodorant is expensive and I'm not sure how effective it would be. As a person with sensitive teeth, Sensodyne toothpaste is the biggest thing I'm resistant to giving up. Even if I didn't have sensitivity issues, I would still be hesitant to put my oral health on the line by using possibly less effective zero waste options. I would definitely want to talk to my dentist first. As for a hair brush, the plastic-free hairbrushes I have tried have not worked well for me. Other than that, I'm feeling really good about my journey to zero waste.