



## PPC's ***Easy Guide to Plastic-Free Eats***

Plastic is a substance the Earth cannot digest. Neither can people or animals.

### What's the problem?

- Plastic litter from takeout orders — including cups, plates, cutlery, and straws — is a prime source of the estimated 269,000 tons of plastic pollution swept into waterways and oceans, where they partially degrade, harming marine life and affecting human health.<sup>1 2</sup>
- More than 100 million pieces of plastic utensils are used by Americans every day. They can take up to 1,000 years to decompose, leaking harmful substances into the Earth while they are breaking down.<sup>3</sup>
- 500 million plastic straws are thrown away in the U.S. every day.<sup>4</sup>
- The use of polystyrene (Styrofoam™) has serious health consequences,<sup>5</sup> and must be eliminated to be designated as a Green Certified restaurant.<sup>6</sup> It is not biodegradable.<sup>7</sup>
- Recycling waste materials is better than landfilling them, but the best option is to not generate them at all.<sup>8</sup>
- Less than 14 percent of plastic packaging, the fastest-growing segment of the packaging industry, gets recycled in the U. S.<sup>9</sup>

### Get Started

- Conduct a survey of what you purchase and what actually gets used by your customers, from delivery and food preparation to storage and disposal.<sup>10</sup>
- Include monthly order size and costs for the following items: plastic wrap, plastic utensils, plastic straws, plastic bibs, plastic containers for take-home food, plastic storage containers, coffee cup lids, drink stirrers.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.asyousow.org/ays\\_report/waste-and-opportunity-2015/](http://www.asyousow.org/ays_report/waste-and-opportunity-2015/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/peter-lehner/fast-food-trash-nation-time-cut-down-packaging-waste>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hearts.com/ecolife/eliminate-food-takeout-containers-reduce-waste/ - sdendnote11sym>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ecocycle.org/bestrawfree/faqs>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hearts.com/ecolife/eliminate-food-takeout-containers-reduce-waste/ - sdendnote4sym>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dinegreen.com/ - !certification-standards/ut0ot>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www3.epa.gov/ttn/atw/hlthef/styrene.html#ref3>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/recycling-beyond-bin>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/peter-lehner/fast-food-trash-nation-time-cut-down-packaging-waste>

<sup>10</sup> Check out Rethink Disposable

[http://www.cleanwater.org/files/publications/CA\\_ReThinkFlyer\\_06.03.14.pdf](http://www.cleanwater.org/files/publications/CA_ReThinkFlyer_06.03.14.pdf)

- Investigate alternatives and costs for each of these items (see section below). Key questions to ask during your review are: **Is this item necessary?** (i.e. coffee stirrers) **Is it available in anything other than plastic?**

### Purchasing

- Buy in bulk whenever possible.
- Buy with as little packaging as possible or packaging free, if available.
- Use reusable dishware for on-site dining (cups, plates, bowls, portion cups, cutlery) if dishwashing is an option.
- Invest in stainless steel food containers with lids for storing and preparing food.
- Eliminate non-necessity disposable items or make available upon request only (i.e. straws, drink stirrers, toothpicks, lids for cups).
- Use real plates, cutlery and glasses, and cloth napkins, if possible.
- Do dishwashing and laundry on-site.
- Provide glass or stainless steel water dispensers for self-serve or refill pitchers.
- Where possible, shorten your supply chain to eliminate as much packaging as possible.
- Be creative with your to-go dishes. One creative example is using glass mason jars for salads or soups and offer a refund if the glass is returned or pay an initial deposit. Or provide food in clay pots for orders.

### Setting Up

- Provide ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, relish etc. in self-serve, bulk dispensers.
- Use refillable containers made of glass, ceramic or stainless steel for salt and pepper, sugar, oil and vinegar, hot sauce etc.
- Put containers for stainless steel cutlery on tables or at a self-serve station.
- Change your restaurant receipts to use BPA-free paper, or email receipts if requested.<sup>11</sup>

### Food Storage

- Eliminate excess packaging wherever possible. Tell suppliers you do not want it.
- Use butcher, waxed and parchment paper wherever possible instead of plastic wrap.
- Eliminate use of all polystyrene foam.
- Create back-of-house composting and recycling.
- Create front-of-house recycling.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ewg.org/bpa/>

## Implement Changes

- Which items are still being requested?
- Establish staff policies, protocol and training (i.e. always ask customers, “Is this for here or to-go? Did you bring your own mug or container? Do you know about our discounts?”)
- Consider staff concerns and suggestions.

Educate Customers - Let your customers know about the plastic pollution problem and how you’re addressing it.

- Clip an information card on your menus explaining that your business is committed to working with PPC to reduce single-use, disposable plastics at your establishment.
- Offer financial incentives for customers who bring reusable cups, containers and utensils (5-10 cents off purchases of hot drinks, 25 cents for take-home containers).
- When customers pay, ask them to fill out a short survey on how they view your new initiatives. Hand them the survey with a pencil.
- Install a collection box for the surveys in a convenient location.
- Ask them to spread the word via social media, community groups, local media etc. Suggested hashtags include: #refillrevolution #userealstuff #make realstuff #thinkreusable #plasticfree

## Track Costs and Responses

- Review long-term vs short-term financial projections on a regular basis to evaluate the changes you’ve instituted.
- Consider the external costs of waste management or reduced waste created, etc.
- Implement customer requests and comments where possible. Let them know you’ve done so.

## Next Steps

- Consider selling branded items such as:
  - Double-walled stainless steel cups
  - Bamboo utensils
  - Take-out stainless steel containers of different sizes
- Get active with your community’s chamber of commerce or other business groups to encourage others to move toward zero waste, and adopt measures to reduce single-use, disposable plastics.
- Be part of the [Ocean Friendly Restaurants Campaign](#).
- Contact Clean Water Action’s [ReThink Disposable](#) project, a technical assistance program that helps food businesses implement best practices to reduce waste and cut costs by minimizing disposable product usage. Their *Reusable Foodware Service Guide* for restaurant supplies is available free on-line.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cleanwater.org/files/publications/Reusable%20Foodware%20Service%20Guide.pdf>

## Where to find Alternative Resources<sup>13</sup>,

- Pans and Accessories - [Webrestaurant](#), [Alibaba](#), [Life Without Plastic](#)
- Storage Jars with lids– [Webrestaurant](#), [Filmore Container](#), [Glassloc containers](#), [Refrigerator Crispers](#), [Cuchinasafe](#) (Lids)
- Gravity Bin Dispensers<sup>14</sup> - [Wayfair](#), [Alibaba](#)
- Straws - <http://thelastplasticstraw.org/resources/>
- Glass or stainless steel self-serve water containers - [Dinuba](#), [Minox](#), [Webrestaurant](#)
- Reusable alternative wrap options include: [Abeego](#), [Beeswrap](#), [Unbleached Butcher paper](#), waxed or parchment paper
- [Reusable Foodware Service Guide](#) from Clean Water Action
- [Plastic-Free Campus Manual](#)<sup>15</sup> from Post Landfill Action Network
- [Marine Debris and Plastic Reduction Toolkit](#) – Source Reduction Resources<sup>16</sup>
- [Biodegradable Products Institute \(BPI\) Product Guide for Food Service](#)<sup>17</sup>

Join Plastic Pollution Coalition in moving toward a world of zero waste.



Plastic Pollution Coalition  
[www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org](http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org)

Information card (to attach to menus - download from the PPC website):

We are committed to the mission of Plastic Pollution Coalition – reducing single-use, disposable plastic, in the operation of our business. We have implemented practices to reduce our use of plastic in food purchasing, preparation, service, storage and disposal. These practices not only benefit you, the consumer, but the environment and wildlife. Please ask us more

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<sup>13</sup> PPC offers these links as suggestions for products to research. We do not endorse the businesses or products themselves.

<sup>14</sup> These are acrylic, not glass or stainless steel.

<sup>15</sup> Developed with the support of Plastic Pollution Coalition

<sup>16</sup> Pages 49-55

<sup>17</sup> A word of caution - These certified products are completely biodegradable ONLY in approved composting facilities. However, many such facilities only hold waste for 30-60 days, while the products need 90-120 days to compost. Hence, they end up as general litter.

about what we do and how we do it. We value your business and thank you for helping create a more sustainable planet for all.