

Food Service Ware Options

The increased use of disposable food service ware over the last decade has changed the way we eat meals but unfortunately it also has a negative impact on our planet. Switching to eco-friendly food service ware may seem like a good choice but choosing a **sustainable** option is the best choice.

Sustainability is a higher standard of eco-friendliness. Sustainability is the ability to maintain a healthy environment through ethical and sound processes. Just because a product is eco-friendly, doesn't mean the manufacturing process and transportation was, too. If the process takes lots of energy and releases pollution, the process is not sustainable, therefore neither is the product. This guide aims to assist you in selecting the best sustainable options for food service ware.

SUSTAINABLE

Reusables are the best environmental option. Reusable food service ware will use far less energy and resources over its lifetime than its disposable counterparts. Even with the energy and water needed to wash items, the overall environmental impact is substantially less than disposable items.



ECO-FRIENDLY

Food soiled paper, uncoated paper & cardboard takeout containers, wood-based chopsticks and flatware.



UNSUSTAINABLE

Items made from plastic, plant-fibers including bamboo, palm leaves, corn, sugar and items that are plastic & wax coated.



Bamboo plates are a great example of food service ware that is eco-friendly, but not sustainable. The bamboo plates themselves are biodegradable, compostable, and eco-friendly however, most composters do not accept bamboo because the amount of time it takes to breakdown.

Even though the plates are made from a renewable resource, the process itself is not sustainable. Bamboo plates rely on cutting down bamboo, which contributes to deforestation and harms ecosystems, strips wildlife of their habitats, and denies local populations of a valuable resource. Additionally, the process of cutting down trees and reducing them to sawdust releases pollution and contributes to climate change.

It is important to remember that all food ware marketed as certified compostable or biodegradable may not breakdown at processing facilities. Many factors play a role, including the ability to distinguish compostable and non-compostable food ware, the food ware item's thickness as well as the time spent going through the composting or anaerobic digestion process. While paper and fiber products generally breakdown, some other products even if certified compostable or biodegradable may decompose only partially or not at all.

Rethinking Disposable Food Ware

When choosing between reusable or disposable items, it's important to think beyond the item's initial cost. Disposables are relatively inexpensive to buy, but you have to continually replenish your supply. Those ongoing costs add up fast. Reusables, on the other hand, cost more upfront but will be used over and over again.

Use this calculator to determine your breakeven point for the cost of reusable items. The breakeven point is the number of uses required to recover your investment. As soon as you exceed the breakeven point for a particular item, you'll be saving money!

BREAKEVEN POINT CALCULATOR

Cost of reusable (each) = \$ _____ ÷

Cost of disposable item (each) = \$ _____

Breakeven point = _____ uses.

Example: Reusable cup = \$1.00 each ÷ Disposable cup = \$0.05 each Breakeven point = 20 uses.

Breakeven points of different types of reusables compared to different types of disposables:

DURABLE PLASTIC



Needs to be reused 10 times to be more sustainable than single use plastic or 17 times to be more sustainable than paper.

GLASSWARE



Needs to be reused 15 times to be more sustainable than paper products.

STAINLESS STEEL



Needs to be reused 24 times to be more environmentally friendly than paper.

CERAMIC



Using ceramic rather than paper reduces material consumption, air and water pollution, and solid waste after just 60 uses.