

PRODUCT PURCHASING GUIDE

This Product Purchasing Guide is based on inventory available at our local restaurant suppliers and waste disposal guidelines specific to Whatcom County. If you have a product that you purchase regularly and it's not listed on this guide, [contact us](#) and we'll help figure out the best option for you. Here are some general guidelines for purchasing:

- Best** Find a way to reduce a need for a product or reuse that product:
- Include opt-in options for cutlery, napkins, condiments, etc. This means, your default option is to *not* include cutlery, napkins, and condiments, and the customers should request that they want these items.
 - Or encourage your customers to indicate their preference to receive utensils in an additional comment box or as part of your customer service script for phone orders.
 - Create a bottle deposit program for your to-go mixed drinks or specialty sauces.
 - Allow customers to bring in their own cups or growlers for beverage fills.
 - If you have concerns about [food safety](#) under section 03348, talk to your contact at the Health Department. They are strong partners of this program and are eager to help with waste reduction.
- Good** When reusable options aren't available, opt for compostable products. There are a lot of green washing imposters out there, so always look for the BPI symbol (below) or the ASTM D6400 specification to ensure our composting facility will accept the product and that it's safe for consumer health.



- Avoid**
- Any compostable product containing PFOAs. These are an extremely dangerous family of chemicals for human consumption and commonly found on compostable products. [This spreadsheet](#) has a comprehensive list of products that are PFOA-free.
 - Compost imposters. There is a lot of greenwashing out there. Make sure to find a product with the BPI logo on it.
 - Styrofoam (expanded polystyrene) is not recyclable locally and will always go in the trash or contaminate the recycling stream. Always opt for something other than Styrofoam.
 - Plastics create a lot of confusion. They must be cleaned, and free of grease and food in order to be recycled. Additionally, not all plastics are created equal; plastics numbered 1-3 are the most valuable for recyclers and most likely to be recycled. All other numbers might be destined for the landfill. It is best to avoid plastics because of the consumer confusion and the amount they contaminate our waste stream.

Forks, knives, spoons

- Best** To reduce waste, your default option should *not* include cutlery. Let your customer opt in for cutlery when ordering as an item modification (i.e. extra cheese, no pickles, add cutlery) or ask them to specify that they would like cutlery in the comments box or as part of your customer service script for phone orders.
- Good**
- [Eco Products cutlery](#). This compostable cutlery can be found in person from local restaurant suppliers or purchased online directly from the company.
 - Verde heavy weight forks, spoons, and knives. This compostable cutlery is available at local restaurant suppliers.
- Avoid**
- Plastic cutlery; plastic cutlery is not recyclable locally. Plastic cutlery will either end up in the landfill or contaminate the recycling waste stream.

To-go boxes

- Best**
- Allow your customer to bring in their own container – subject to current health code.
 - Start a buy-in program for those repeat customers. They buy a reusable to-go container up front, and then get to reuse it at your restaurant over and over. [We can help](#) set up a program like this at your establishment.
- Good**
- [Bridgegate](#) to-go boxes. These compostable boxes are available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid**
- [Primeware](#) to-go boxes. These compostable boxes are available at local restaurant supply stores. While they might be compostable locally, they do not have a BPI certification so it's difficult to know for sure.
 - Plastic to-go containers. If you must pick plastic, look for containers with the numbers 1-3 listed in the recycling chasing arrows and make sure to let customers know the plastic must be food- and grease-free before recycling.
 - Styrofoam to-go containers.

Plates

- Best**
- [Earthchoice](#) plates. These compostable plates are available at local restaurant supply stores.
 - [Primeware](#) plates. These compostable plates are available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid**
- Plastic plates. If you must pick plastic, look for containers with the numbers 1-3 listed in the recycling chasing arrows and make sure to let customers know the plastic must be food- and grease-free before recycling.
 - Styrofoam.

Bowls

- Best**
- [Earthchoice](#) bowls. These compostable bowls are available at local restaurant supply stores.
 - [Primeware](#) bowls. These compostable bowls are available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid**
- Plastic bowls. If you must pick plastic, look for containers with the numbers 1-3 listed in the recycling chasing arrows and make sure to let customers know the plastic must be food- and grease-free before recycling.
 - Styrofoam.

Cold Cups & Lids

- Best** Allow customers to bring in their own cups to fill.
- Good** [Earthchoice](#) cups & lids. They look like plastic, but are made out of plant-based materials and can be composted. These compostable cups & lids are available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid**
- Plastic cups. If you must pick plastic, look for containers with the numbers 1-3 listed in the recycling chasing arrows and make sure to let customers know the plastic must be food- and grease-free before recycling.
 - Styrofoam.

Hot Cups & Lids

- Best** Allow customers to bring in their own cups to fill.
- Good** [Primeware](#) cups & lids. They look like plastic, but are made out of plant material and can be composted. These compostable cups & lids are available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid**
- Paper cups with plastic liners; any paper cup that isn't BPI verified. The plastic liner makes the cups neither compostable nor recyclable.
 - The black plastic lids are neither recyclable nor compostable locally and cause a lot of contamination in our recycling stream.
 - Styrofoam.

Prepackaged beverages

- Best** Aluminum cans. These are recyclable and have a lower carbon footprint than other recyclable materials.
- Good** Glass containers. These are recyclable, but have a higher carbon footprint from shipping due to their weight.
- Avoid** Plastic containers. The market for recycling plastic bottles is variable so they often end up in the landfill.

Straws

- Best** To reduce waste, have your default option *not* include straws. Instead let your customer opt in for straws when ordering as an item modification (i.e. extra cheese, no pickles, add straw) or ask them to specify that they would like straw in the comments box or via phone order.
- Good**
- [Paper straws](#)- great for hot and cold beverages. Choose from the list of paper straws that are BPI certified. These are accepted in our composting facility and free of toxic chemicals that will leech into beverages. These compostable straws are not available at local restaurant supply stores.
 - [Compostable plastic straws](#)- great for cold beverages. These compostable straws are not available at local restaurant supply stores, but are found on the website.
- Avoid** Unfortunately, none of our local restaurant suppliers have good straw options. If you choose to use plastic straws or paper straws without the BPI certification, make sure customers know that they need to throw the straws in the landfill trash, not the compost or recycling.

Napkins

- Best** To reduce waste, have your default option *not* include napkins. Instead let your customer opt in for napkins when ordering as an item modification (i.e. extra cheese, no pickles, add napkins) or ask them to specify that they would like napkins in the comments box or via phone order.
- Good** Brown paper napkins. Napkins are compostable, not recyclable, since they will be covered in food and grease once used. There are many varieties available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid** White paper napkins. These are compostable, however the process to bleach the paper to give them their white appearance is chemically intensive and unnecessary.

Sauce containers

- Best**
- To reduce waste, have your default option *not* include sauces on the side. Instead let your customer opt in for sauces on the side when ordering as an item modification (i.e. extra cheese, no pickles, add sauce on the side) or ask them to specify that they would like sauces in the comments box or via phone order.
 - Sell your specialty sauces in large containers with a bottle deposit for customers.
- Good**
- [Earthchoice](#) 2oz portion cups. These compostable cups are available at local restaurant supply stores.
- Avoid**
- [Primeware](#) 2oz portion cups. These portion cups are available at local restaurant supply stores. While they might be compostable locally, they do not have a BPI certification so it's difficult to know for sure.
 - Plastic portion cups.
 - Styrofoam portion cups.
 - Single-serve sauce packets.