

Sustainable Purchasing Guide

Single-Use Food Service Ware



Use this Guide When Purchasing

- Disposable food service ware items including cold and hot cups, plates and bowls, takeout containers and trays, lids, cutlery, straws and stirrers and napkins
- Catering services
- Event/meeting planning services



While food service ware may not be the first thing you think of when planning an event, being thoughtful about how food and beverages are served can support reducing waste and exposure to toxic chemicals, among other sustainability goals. As part of your planning, first assess whether reusables are available and practical for the application. If disposables are necessary, be sure to also check with your hauler/composter/facility ahead of time regarding what types of items they accept.

How to Purchase

Check with your central procurement office or administrative staff to find out if you have any contracts that employees are required to use to purchase food service ware. When seeking these products in a store or online, check the product details to confirm the product meets the Minimum Requirements listed below.

Product Requirements- *specify or seek:*

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS/SPECIFICATIONS	LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Styrofoam™ or expanded polystyrene containers • Paper-based food service ware & napkins contain a minimum 40% post-consumer recycled content (or lack of availability documentation is provided per SB 1383) <i>(see related SB 1383 reporting requirements on page 2)</i> • Paper-based food service ware items are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncoated <i>(i.e. no plastic-lined paper plates, cups, etc.)</i> and/or • BPI, CMA, or Vincotte OK Compost certified 	<p><i>Minimum Requirements plus one or more of the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No plastic, including no “compostable” plastic • Food service ware is GreenScreen certified • Paper-based food service ware is unbleached or labeled processed chlorine free (PCF) • Napkins are Green Seal, UL ECOLOGO or FSC certified (FSC “Recycled” or “Mix”)

SB 1383 Reporting Requirements

Coordinate with your agency's SB 1383 lead to maintain required documentation, including:

- Records verifying the minimum recycled content of the paper products
- Invoices or order forms that include paper type and volume details
- Applicable documentation if compliant products are not available or are cost-prohibitive

Ecolabels to Look For



Related Tips

To reduce waste:

- Understand before you purchase the composting and recycling options available at the event facility.
- If using all reusables is not feasible, consider a hybrid approach that targets reusables for some items, such as water pitchers, platters, serving and/or individual utensils, and allows disposables for the remaining items.
- Encourage participants to bring their own reusable mugs, water bottles, and/or utensils.

Benefits

Using reusables when you can:

- Saves money vs. repeat disposable purchases for reoccurring events.
- Reduces potential for wayward litter that ends up harming aquatic life.

BPI, CMA, OK Compost, or GreenScreen certified products:

- Reduces exposure to toxic chemicals commonly found in disposable food service ware products (primarily per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or "PFAS" chemicals).

Additional Resources

- [Avoiding Hidden Hazards: A Purchaser's Guide to Safer Foodware](#)
- [ReThink Disposable](#) - Resources for businesses, governments, and communities on using reusables instead of disposables. Great case studies and more!
- Check the [StopWaste Sustainable Purchasing Website](#) for additional implementation resources.

PRODUCT REGISTRIES

Find/verify certified products by using the following online certified product registries:

- [BPI Certified Products](#)
- [CMA Accepted Items](#)
- [GreenScreen Certified Products](#)

Note: There is not an online certified product directory for Vincotte OK Compost products. Instead, look for the OK Compost ecolabel on the product.

ABOUT PFAS CHEMICALS

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, aka "PFAS", are a toxic family of "nonstick" fluorinated chemicals that are ubiquitous in food ware and food packaging. People can ingest PFAS through packaged food and even contaminated drinking water. PFAS are hormone disrupting chemicals that have also been linked to a wide range of adverse health effects.

BPI, CMA, OK Compost or GreenScreen certified products do not contain PFAS.

ABOUT SENATE BILL 1383

SB 1383 ([14 CCR 18993.3 et seq.](#)) set methane emission reduction targets for California, with a focus on reducing organic waste to landfills – a key source of methane emissions. The regulations established purchasing requirements for recycled content paper to ensure strong markets for recovered paper and to keep paper out of landfills.

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