



# Foodware Ordinance Staff Quicksheet

The County of San Mateo and some local cities within the county adopted a new foodware ordinance that prohibits most single-use plastic foodware and requires items made from fiber. Reusable foodware is encouraged and required by some cities.

**Important note:** The public may have questions about changes to your foodware and operations as a result of this new ordinance. Please refer to the back of this sheet for possible responses to customer questions.



## USE REUSABLES!

**Recommended:** Use reusable instead of disposable foodware.

- Use reusables made from metal, ceramic, and glass for dine-in. **Free technical and financial assistance** is available to help you switch to reusables for dine-in!
- Encourage consumers to bring their own reusable to-go containers.
- Consider foodware services that provide reusables for dine-in and take-out operations.



## CHOOSE FIBER-BASED!

**Required:** Use natural fiber-based, compostable materials (e.g., paper, sugarcane, bamboo, etc.).

- Required for disposable plates, bowls, cups, food trays/boats, clamshells, boxes, and other containers. These fiber items must be PFAS-free. Compostable plastic lining (only) is ok for above items, but must be approved by Biodegradable Products Institute, Compost Manufacturing Alliance, or another 3rd party approved by County.
- Required for the following disposable side items (a.k.a. accessories) and their packaging, if any: straws, stirrers, utensils, cocktail/toothpicks.



## REFUSE PLASTIC!

**Not Allowed:** Use of plastic for most disposable foodware.

- Disposable foodware made from traditional plastic (petroleum-based) or compostable plastic (a.k.a. bioplastics, PLA, etc.) are not allowed.
- Polystyrene foodware (all #6 plastics and Styrofoam) is prohibited.
- Accessories must be distributed only upon request and/or at dispensers that dispense one item at a time. Refillable condiment dispensers are allowed.
- Accessories cannot be bundled.



# FOODWARE AWARE

## Customer Frequently Asked Questions

### Why did you change your foodware?

We are complying with the new local foodware law that will help prevent plastic pollution and reduce waste.

### Why do I have to request utensils, straws and other small side items?

In the past, customers were given utensils, napkins, condiment packets and other “accessory” items that they didn’t want or need. These items often end up on our streets, beaches, and waterways. So we are being proactive and only giving out these items when actually needed by the customer.

### Why are small items like utensils and napkins no longer bundled together?

By not bundling these small items together, we are making sure that you only receive the items you need while ensuring items that you don’t need are not wasted.

### Why aren’t you using compostable plastics?

Since compostable plastics (aka bioplastics, PLA) look like traditional plastics, they are often sorted improperly by consumers and sent to the landfill. Even when sent to the composting facility, many do not properly break down into usable compost. Compostable plastics also pose the same threats to wildlife and the health of the environment as traditional plastics because they do not break down into compost in water or on the street (if littered).

### Are detachable plastic lids on beverage cups / food containers allowed?

Yes. Under the current law, detachable beverage and food container lids are not required to be made from natural fiber. Since many food facilities provide grab-and-go food options, the lids will need to be transparent (so plastic) to allow customers to see what they may be buying. Also, many plastic lids provide a more secure lock on the food container/cup than the natural fiber alternatives.

### Are there issues with allergies & fiber-based items? specifically those made from wheat stalks?

No. Disposable foodware made from wheat is reported to be made from the stalk or stem of wheat plants and not made from the grain, which is the cause of allergic reactions.

If you have any additional questions, or need any assistance, contact the Foodware Aware Team.

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