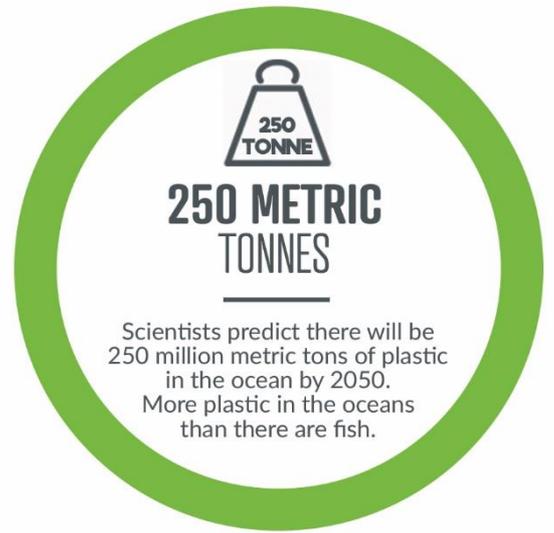


FACT SHEET

TAKE-AWAY FOOD CONTAINERS



Food, glorious food....

Greater Manchester has a thriving street food scene, not to mention more than a few take-aways, so it's no surprise that as a city-region we go through a serious number of take-away food containers each year.

While the huge diversity and quality of food on offer around Greater Manchester is certainly something to be celebrated, the mountain of packaging that comes with it, including a whole load of single-use plastic, is something we need to act on. Below is a run-down of some of the options available for take-away food containers and how they rank in terms of planet-friendliness.

The Waste Hierarchy – making the right choices

As with all of the #PlasticFreeGM factsheets, we follow the principles of the waste hierarchy to reduce our impact on the planet. The waste hierarchy states that we can help the planet by ranking options in the following order (best to worst) - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle/Compost, Disposal. The best move is always to reduce your use of resources, and to go with reusable options - in this instance that could mean encouraging customers to bring their own reusable container (e.g. Tupperware) and offering a discount to those who do (see below).



REUSABLE FOOD CONTAINERS

Key:



A really sustainable choice. Good work!



Room for improvement (try & move towards the green choices) but doing good.



Not a great choice for the planet, try and move to an amber or green choice soon.



What to choose – take-away food containers

CHOICE	RATING	WHY? THINGS TO CONSIDER
We encourage our customers to bring their own reusable take-away food containers, and offer a discount to those who do.		Reducing the amount of single-use packaging your businesses uses, and helping customers to switch from disposable to reusable, is a really sustainable choice. Keep up the good work.
We sell reusable take-away food containers, and offer a discount to customers who use them.		As a general rule reusable is always a better option than disposable. Buy in some reusable take-away containers to sell, and find ways to encourage your customers to keep using them (see behavioural change section below).
We offer reusable take-away food containers to customers on a deposit return scheme, and offer discounts on food to customers who take part.		Could you 'rent' reusable take-away containers to your customers on a deposit return scheme? PlasticFreeGM are looking into how we can make reusable schemes easier across the city-region.

What to choose take-away food containers continued....

<p>We use 100% compostable card / paperboard take-away food containers - packaging must state EN13432 to be recognised as '100% compostable'</p>		<p>The best of the bunch if you're using disposables. Going 100% compostable is great, but there's still a lot of energy and embedded carbon footprint in constantly producing, delivering and disposing of single-use items. If your business disposes of any of your take-away packaging always check with your waste contractor what can go in your food waste/compost service. Some composting services can't accept packaging, even if the packaging states it's 100% compostable. In Greater Manchester, compostable packaging cannot be put in residents' food and garden bins at home.</p>
<p>We use aluminium (foil) take-away food containers with a cardboard lid.</p>		<p>Foil is more easily and widely recycled than a lot of other materials. It can go in residents' recycling at home, or your businesses dry mixed recycling service. The cardboard lid is very likely to have a plastic film lining. This means it cannot go in the paper/card recycling in residents' homes, or in your businesses card/paper recycling. It is also not suitable for the compost/food waste bin. Unfortunately, the card lid still has to go to general waste.</p>
<p>We use 'Bagasse' - sugar cane based 100% compostable take-away food packaging.</p>		<p>This is a fairly new 'sustainable' product made from sugar cane material. The product does have a fairly high carbon footprint, but can be composted. Always check with your waste contractor what can go in your food waste/compost service. Some composting services can't accept packaging, even if the packaging states it's 100% compostable. In Greater Manchester, compostable packaging cannot be put in residents' food and garden bins at home.</p>

What to choose take-away food containers continued....

<p>We use cardboard take-away food containers - but the packaging does NOT state '100% compostable' or 'EN13432'</p>		<p>It's important to pick your product carefully. Take-away containers that are made of card, but don't meet the standard for compostability (European Standard EN13432) are very likely to have a plastic film lining. This means they cannot be composted, and also cannot be put in the card/paper recycling, so they'll have to go to general waste.</p>
<p>We use 'mixed material' take-away food containers / packaging, e.g. standard sandwich packet - a cardboard container with a plastic film window</p>		<p>Whenever a disposable packet or container is made of more than one material, it instantly gets trickier to recycle. In order for your business or your customers to recycle this packaging, they need to separate the plastic film from the cardboard part. Because these products aren't made with sustainability in mind, it's also very likely that the card part will be coated with a plastic film.</p>
<p>We use single-use plastic take-away food containers - Usually clear or black plastic, sturdy & sometimes labelled as microwave safe. Usually made of polypropylene (PP), non-expanded polystyrene (PS), or polyethylene triphosphate (PET)</p>		<p>Plastic take-away food containers of any sort cannot currently be recycled in residents' home recycling bins. While some customers do keep sturdier containers to use for storing leftovers, as a business you won't know whether they are kept and reused, or go straight in the bin. Try switching to an amber or green choice soon.</p>
<p>We use expanded polystyrene 'foam' take-away food containers</p>		<p>This is an option to avoid at all costs. Polystyrene is not widely recycled, and is most likely to end up in the general waste. If it ends up as litter, polystyrene (like other plastics) degrades over time into smaller and smaller bits called micro-plastics. These get into soil, water systems, wildlife and our bodies, causing untold harm.</p>

How to coax your customers towards reusable options?

By far the most sustainable thing to do is move towards reusable take-away food containers, and reduce the number of single-use containers you use. The added bonus is that it will save your business money! So, here's some ideas for helping your customers to go reusable.

**MORE
PLASTIC
THAN FISH!**

SCIENTISTS PREDICT THAT, IF WE CONTINUE AS WE ARE, BY 2050 THERE WILL BE MORE PLASTIC IN OUR OCEANS THAN FISH!

MOVING TO REUSABLE OPTIONS - HINTS AND TIPS

Charge for disposables - research has shown that adding an overt charge on top of the price of the food for the use of a disposable container has more of an impact than offering a discount for customers who bring their own reusable container. It also flips the view of what is normal. Those who bring a reusable food container aren't exceptional (or weird), it's the people who don't have their own Tupperware that need to catch up.

Offer a discount to customers who bring their own reusable food container. If you feel that charging extra for the use of disposable take-away container could alienate your customers, at least make sure you are offering a discount to customers who do bring their own, and set the discount at a rate that makes it attractive... if you offer a bigger discount, you might even gain some extra customers!

Shout about it! Bringing your own reusable container to the take-away is still quite a new thing, and customers are still a bit nervous. Put a sign in your window, and put some posts on your social media to let customers know that they are welcome to bring their own container, and that they'll be rewarded with a discount (or not charged for a disposable container).



Tell people you have made a change

If you decide to switch to some of the sustainable behaviours above, put up a sign or tweet about it so that your customers know why you've made the change. That way you get the credit for making the eco-choice, and customers will understand that this is part of a positive shift. Remember to tag us @PlasticFreeGM so we can retweet you.