

## A cafe owner's guide to using reusable foodware during Covid-19

Our global community has entered into very uncertain and unforeseen times. In the context of small businesses throughout Australia, we know that this is challenging and we hope to see you come out stronger on the other side.

To ensure small businesses can bounce back, many of you have adapted to provide takeaway and home delivery services - this is of course a necessity right now.

However this has led to a **dramatic increase in the quantity of disposable items** entering landfills and fearfully, the natural environment, as well as the increased use of fossil fuels in the production process. We all know that reusables are the best option to curb plastic pollution and waste, so we pose the question...

***Can reusables exist in a time of coronavirus?***



The Victorian Government has released the following information in regard to using reusables during Coronavirus:

“***There is currently no evidence to suggest there is any benefit in switching to disposables.** The most effective measures you can take are practicing good hand hygiene and cleaning, with particular focus on shared frequently touched surfaces.*

”

They go on to say:

“*Coronaviruses are relatively sensitive to both heat and detergents (including soap). For this reason, normal washing of dishes in hot water (or better still, a dishwasher) using detergent is likely to completely inactivate any coronavirus present.*

”

So yes, reusables **can coexist with the responsible and safe service of food and beverages**. Viruses and bacteria can exist on both single-use and reusables alike. Single-use items are not cleaner or safer - it's about following good hygiene practices. **Normal dishwashing practices can remove the virus from reusables** - the same cannot be said for single-use packaging, which usually cannot be washed.

Here are some tips on how cafes can reduce plastic waste through the use of reusables during this time.



## COFFEE CUPS

● **Accept clean reusable cups** - this can be done without the customer's lid. If you're unsure, you can wash the cup before using it, or utilise a barrier while handling it.

● **Do a contactless exchange!** A safe option with no risk to customer or barista. This process can also be applied for reusable cold cups such as jars for smoothies or juices.



### The Perfect Contactless Coffee

1. Pour coffee shot into an in-house vessel
2. Have the customer set the cup on counter
3. Pour the shot into cup without touching it
4. Pour steamed milk on top
5. Have the customer place their own lid

@SonderCoffeePerth

● **Make use of 'swap n go' cup network schemes**, where cups are stored and sanitised in-house. These are designed to be easily incorporated into your normal operation. Depending on the network, you may pay a fee for the service and charge a deposit and refund it when the item is returned. Or, like a library book, customers borrow the cup and return it, with the onus on them to return or they are charged by the network for the cost of the cup. Established cup network programs include [Returnr](#) and [Green Caffeine](#).





## TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS

● **Permit customers to bring their own clean containers.** Like coffee cups, these can be washed in house if you'd prefer. And just like a 'contactless pour' of coffee, it's also possible to safely implement a 'contactless transfer' of food into a customer's reusable container.

● **Offer a container take-back program** - allow your regular customers to borrow a container and bring them back. This can be done on a deposit system.

● **Implement an external container network scheme** such as [Returnr](#) or [Retub](#). These work on the same basis as the 'swap n go' cup systems.



## CUTLERY, BAGS & STRAWS

● **Don't provide cutlery or straws** unless specified by the customer - during lockdowns, food and beverages will be consumed at home where reusables are plentiful. If requested, have compostable wood utensils and paper straws.

● **Encourage your regulars to BYO** bag to pick up their takeaway.

● If you deliver independently, **don't provide disposable bags**. Instead, drivers can load food into reusable bags, and at the home, ask the customer to remove the items. While this may seem tedious, think about how wasteful it is for a bag to be used for 5 minutes! Not to mention the extra cost for you.





If choosing reusables - we recommend you incorporate signage to let your customers know **what you are doing to keep them safe**, and perhaps print any relevant details on your takeaway menus (e.g. encouraging BYO).

We fully acknowledge the predicament you're in, adapting day by day to an ever changing scenario. Whichever way you chose to fall on reusables vs compostables, it's an individual businesses decision.

Remember, there is also a **wide range of 100% compostable takeaway products** that can be utilised to service your needs. Refer to our companion guide on [ordering compostable takeaway products](#) for help on choosing the right ones for you.

*please note: we don't benefit commercially from any brands or products we recommend.*

## A NOTE ON FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS

Food safety is governed by the [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#).

Accepting reusable cups and containers from customers is allowable under the code, providing these are **suitable for use, clean and not single-use**.

A cup or container return service (as outlined above) ensures compliance with food safety rules. If in doubt, please consult your local food safety authority.

