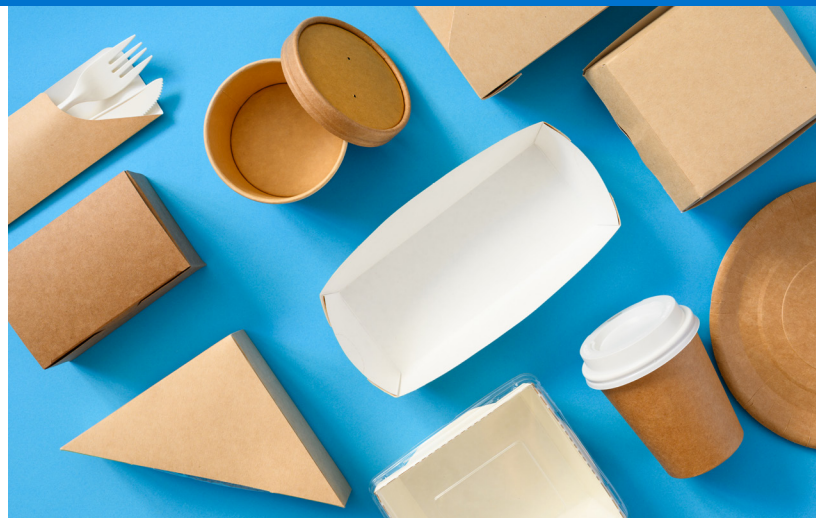


Food Service Ware

[MODEL SPECIFICATIONS »](#)

Product Subcategories Covered

- Single-use bags
- Plastic wrap, paper wrappers
- Disposable plates and bowls
- Cold and hot cups, cup lids
- To-go containers,
- Disposable cutlery, stir sticks, straws



Issues and Impacts

Differences in local recycling/composting systems: Local waste handling systems vary widely, and this must be considered in purchasing decisions. Many localities still lack municipal composting, for example, which means compostability is not an important factor. While many plastic foodware products are theoretically recyclable, contamination with leftover food can render them unacceptable by recyclers.

Cost impacts: PFAS-treated molded fiber containers are sometimes cheaper than lined containers, and there may be minor price differences in other foodware between certified and uncertified products. If water or grease resistance is not important, unlined containers can save money.

Plastic pollution: Single-use plastic bags and foodware are the largest component of municipal waste (32%). Marine plastic

pollution has impacted at least 267 species worldwide, including 86% of all sea turtle species, 44% of all seabird species and 43% of all marine mammal species. Plastic pollution threatens food safety and quality, human health, coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change.

Human health hazards: 90% of plastics are produced from fossil fuels, and plastics production can harm human health at every step of production. Harmful chemicals can leach out of some plastics into food.

Contamination of recycling and composting streams: Contamination of recycled plastics can make them unacceptable for use, increasing the amount of waste going to landfill. Contamination of compost with chemicals such as PFAS can transmit the chemicals to soils.

Chemicals of Concern

Fluorinated chemicals: Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is a family of chemicals representing thousands of compounds. Some are very persistent in the environment and are linked to health impacts in women's reproduction and child development, hormone effects, and increased risk of cancer. PFAS is commonly added to food takeout containers made of molded fiber (typically bagasse, wheat fiber or wood pulp) to impart grease and water resistance.

Styrene: Styrene (used to manufacture polystyrene) is a carcinogen, and may be transferred to food from polystyrene. Styrofoam is a form of polystyrene, is not typically accepted in community recycling, and often breaks down in the environment to pollute waterways. Styrofoam cups and containers (resin #6) are popular due to their low cost, waterproof properties, and effectiveness as heat insulators.

BPA: Polycarbonate plastic (resin #7) is composed of bisphenol-A (BPA) molecules. BPA can leach from plastic containers, and is known to be a hormone disruptor with developmental toxicity.

Plasticizers: Some plastics, particularly PVC or vinyl (resin #3), require plasticizer chemicals to make them flexible. Phthalates are common plasticizers that are hormone disruptors and can harm the reproductive and nervous systems, especially in children.

Chlorinated organic compounds: Bleaching of paper pulp with chlorine or chlorine derivatives produces chlorinated organic compounds, including chloroform, a known carcinogen.

SPLC Recommendations

Convert to reusable foodware. Completely replacing disposable foodware with durable, reusable, foodware made of stainless steel, aluminum, ceramics or glass is the safest and most sustainable approach. However, this conversion requires up-front investment (in dishwashing and storage), changes in business processes, and consumer education. For certain situations, like large events, reusables may not be practical. Review the specific needs for foodware with buyers and tailor the bid to minimize disposables.

Specify BPI or CMA certified compostable foodware. Until the conversion to reusable foodware is complete, safer disposable foodware may be needed. Both BPI (Biodegradable Products Institute) and CMA (Compost Manufacturers Alliance) certifications prohibit PFAS use and ensure that containers are truly compostable. Each certification also features lists of compliant products.

Specify GreenScreen Certified foodware. This is a new certification for all varieties of disposable foodware that prohibits PFAS and thousands of other chemicals of concern. Note that GreenScreen Certified does not certify compostability.

Specify chlorine-free bleaching for paper products. If available, specify unbleached paper or paper bleached without chlorine or chlorine derivatives.

SPLC Category Guidance

SPLC's [Recommendations for Sustainable Food Service Ware](#) offer in-depth information on performance criteria, pricing, model contract language used by other purchasers, case studies, and other resources.

Resources

- [GreenScreen Certified foodware](#)
- [BPI Certified foodware](#)
- [CMA Certified foodware](#)