



# SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING QUICK GUIDE: SAFER FOOD SERVICEWARE

*Ecology Center and Safer States' Sustainable Purchasing Quick Guides are a series of fact sheets highlighting sustainable purchasing options for high volume, high impact products. They are designed to help cities, counties, and states create safer communities through the purchase of more environmentally and socially conscious products.*

## Why Food Serviceware?

The food serviceware product category includes straws, cutlery, food containers, bottled water, plastic grocery bags, and cups, among others. More food packaging and foodware products end up in the marine environment than any item category. According to the [Minderoo Monaco Commission](#), "Plastics are responsible for significant harms to human health, the economy, and the earth's environment. These harms occur at every stage of the plastic life cycle, from extraction of the coal, oil, and gas that are its main feedstocks through to ultimate disposal into the environment." Though some plastic products are recycled, most end up in the environment where they persist, or break down into smaller components called microplastics, that pose threats to humans and wildlife. There are also harmful additives in plastics which often show up in recycled products.

## Solutions: Municipalities Taking Action

Municipalities are addressing this issue by restricting the use of single-use food serviceware. San Francisco requires the use of [reusable cups](#) at events that require a City permit or are held on City property. More than 30 local jurisdictions have enacted policies that require food businesses to [ask before providing](#) customers with food serviceware. A Berkeley, CA foodware ordinance requires restaurants with on-site dining to [use reusable food serviceware](#). When disposable foodware is used, the ordinance requires it to be free of PFAS chemicals. The state of New York has placed [restrictions on intentionally-added PFAS](#) in food packaging. Similarly, the state of Washington has [banned intentionally-added PFAS](#) in some paper or plant fiber food serviceware. Since 2021, single-use plastic plates, cutlery, and straws have been [restricted in the EU](#). In Scotland, there is a [nationwide ban](#) on certain single-use plastics. Canada now restricts the manufacture, import, and sale of [six categories of single-use plastics](#).

## Benefits

Restricting use of single-use food serviceware, and using healthier alternatives when necessary, protects human and environmental health. Fewer toxic chemicals and pollution end up in the environment and the risk of contamination by harmful chemicals is reduced. Switching from single-use to reusable products reduces waste and saves money by reducing or eliminating repurchasing costs.

## Tools and Resources

- [Ecology Center's Directory of Sustainable Purchasing: Food Service Ware](#); Directory of resources for food serviceware purchasing
- [Upstream's Reuse Policy Playbook](#); Offers policy models and strategies for reducing the consumption and harmful effects of disposable products
- [Avoiding Hidden Hazards: A Purchaser's Guide to Safer Foodware](#); Guidance to help purchasers to navigate healthier disposable foodware purchasing
- [Single Use Disposable Foodware and Litter Reduction Act](#); City ordinance from Berkeley, CA that serves as a model food serviceware policy