

## Reducing Waste at Your Event

The goal is to have the least amount of trash to dispose of (landfill or waste-to-energy facility) as is practical.

**Start early.** Reducing waste isn't hard but does require a bit of planning. Think about your event.

- Is it a recurring event? If so, what did you do last time, and how can you make it better (less waste)?
- How many people do you expect?
- Is the public invited or is this a private event? (If the public is invited, commercial kitchen rules including temp., restaurant permit, at least one certified food handler, and commercially washed dishes.)
- What food and/or beverages do you plan to serve?
- What do you need for plates, bowls, napkins, hot cups, cold cups, utensils, etc.?
- Do you have access to composting of food waste?

**Reduce** first. Do you really need it? Can you rethink your menu choices to minimize the type of serving goods you will need? If you are serving punch and cookies, plastic cups (marked with recyclable symbol and numbers 1-6) and napkins may be all you need. As much as possible, reduce the use of single serving packets or packages, and use bulk serving containers. The little packets are all lined with plastic and are not recyclable or compostable.

**Reuse** next. Use durable goods—containers, serving platters, tableware and dishes if possible. If your event is private and you haven't invited the public, encourage local guests to bring their own dishes and utensils (and extras for out-of-towners), as well as some containers to share leftovers. Consider investing in sturdy plastic picnic ware that can be used year around for potlucks and other gatherings.

**Recycle.** It's easy to recycle beverage cans and bottles and packaging from store bought items, etc. The key here is *keep it clean*, but material does not need to be sanitized.

### Compost

Basic: In Marion County, "if it grows, it goes." All fruit and vegetable matter and any coffee grounds and filters can go into your yard debris cart or into your home compost pile. In Salem and Keizer, all food waste including meat and dairy can go into your Mixed Organics cart along with napkins, paper towels and pizza boxes.

Advanced: This part is a bit more complicated. For more advanced tips about hosting zero waste events, feel free to contact Judy Skinner, [judy@askmeaboutrecycling.com](mailto:judy@askmeaboutrecycling.com) or 503-569-0146 (email preferred) with any questions.

**Trash** – everything that is left after all of the above. Take notes and/or pictures on what items end up here to assist in planning for next year.

### Collection Containers:

Garten has ClearStream containers available for check out. Blue ClearStream containers are used for collecting cans and bottles and green ClearStream containers for collecting compostables. You will need to add signs to the green containers, depending on what compostables you are collecting. You will want enough containers to put one by EACH garbage can but you may be able to have fewer garbage cans. Depending on the size of your event, you may be able to have only one garbage/compost/recycle station, which will simplify monitoring of materials in each of the containers. If you are including composting, you will need to staff each station or sort the material collected. Please contact Garten Services at 503-581-4472 to reserve containers for your event.

THANK YOU for making less waste at your event. Every little bit helps.

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More on Advanced Composting:

If you have a person to coordinate Recycling and Composting, they may be able to make arrangements with the garbage company to pick up more approved compostable products (for composting at PRC, a commercial composting facility), including certain paper plates, bowls, cups and utensils. This person will be responsible to the garbage company for making sure that only approved compostable products are in the designated containers.

It is always better to use washable dishes and utensils if practical. If not, compostables may be a good choice. For simplest composting, I recommend:

- **Plates:** Chinet® or very cheap, very thin, very plain paper plates. Avoid plates with printed designs and patterns. They are coated with a plastic film that does not compost.
- **Bowls:** Chinet® brand or hot cups (see below).
- **Napkins** – Chose any pastel color you want as long as they are labeled as “napkins.” Avoid dark colors. (“Paper” towels are a whole other story. Please ask me if you want to know.) Please avoid the towelettes or wipes as they are reinforced with plastic and not compostable.
- **Hot cups:** Ecotainer® and Solo® BARE® compostable. Caution: Solo® BARE® also comes in a “made from recycled material” model that is NOT compostable. Remember, the standard “to go” cups, like you get from a coffee shop, are not recyclable nor compostable due to a plastic liner.
- **Cold cups:** Any waxed paper cups, or any of the hot cups above. You should be able to peel up a bit of wax with your fingernail if they are actually waxed. Most are actually plastic coated and not compostable.
- **Utensils:** Depending on your food choices, you might not need utensils except for a spoon to stir coffee. Perhaps you can use plastic utensils and collect and wash them for use next time. Approved compostable utensils are available but only from stores specializing in compostable products.
- **Toothpicks or Skewers:** These can be a good substitute for utensils. For instance, cut fruit into large 2-bite sized chunks and avoid the need for forks. Any wooden toothpicks are compostable, but no frilly plastic on the end. If you need something larger, consider a short skewer. They come as short as 4.5”.
- **Coffee stir sticks:** Provide a few washable spoons for use and reuse. You may also use wooden sticks or fettuccini (yes I mean the pasta. If you leave it in a whole cup of hot coffee for a long while, it will soften, but as long as you stir and take it out, it will be fine and compostable.)
- **Sugar and sweetener:** Serve sugar in a pouring container and use packets only for other sweeteners. Did you know that those little packets that tear like paper actually have a thin layer of plastic to keep out the moisture? That thin layer of plastic will not compost.
- **Creamer:** These packets are also non-compostable but you probably knew that. You can serve cream or liquid creamer in a container that has an automatic (flip down) closure. It also needs to sit in ice to keep it cold and make the health inspector happy.
- **Condiments** (ketchup, mustard, salt, pepper, etc.): These packets are also not compostable. Whenever possible, serve these in reusable dispensers.