

ATHENS' PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISPOSABLE FOOD SERVING-WARE

Athens Services provides the following recommendations regarding **disposable food serving-ware** as a means to enhance our ability to recycle or compost discarded items, thus diverting material from landfills and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. (These recommendations are based on overall recycling and compost markets and technology capabilities as of 9/7/2021).

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING PRIOR TO MAKING ANY PURCHASES

BEWARE OF GREENWASHING. The Federal Trade Commission has Green Guidelines to ensure environmental claims are not misleading, including standardizing the marketing use of “compostable,” “biodegradable,” and “recyclable.” Please visit [FTC Green Guidelines](#) for more information and resources.

CONSIDER REUSABLES FIRST. Athens encourages the use of reusable food serving-ware wherever possible, especially for hard to recycle, single-use disposable products. The nonprofit Clean Water Fund operates a program called ReThink Disposables. They help businesses convert to reusable serving-ware, which has proven to save businesses thousands of dollars every year. ReThink Disposable experts help create implementation plans that fit the unique needs of each business, they research optimal materials, and assist with customer engagement. Prebates for reusable food serving-ware are available on a first come, first served basis. For more information, please visit [ReThinkDisposable.org](#).



WHEN PURCHASING PLASTIC-WARE. Athens encourages purchasing recyclable plastic products made with pre-consumer and post-consumer recycled plastic content. Before purchasing plastic products, confirm the plastic resin type (the plastic number in the chasing arrows). Not all plastic numbers have resale value and a product's color or transparency does not denote plastic resin type. To ensure recyclability, Athens recommends the following:

- **Choose plastic items made from #5 (PP) Polypropylene, #1 (PET or PETE) Polyethylene Terephthalate, or #1 rPET** (recycled polyethylene terephthalate, such as Bottle Box). Food serving-ware made from other plastic resins have little-if-any recycling value.
- **Choose plastic items that are white or clear and avoid black plastic.** The darker the color, the harder to recycle. Dark colored plastics are not detectable by Athens' optical sorters and have lower recycling rates (regardless of resin type).

WHEN PURCHASING COMPOSTABLE-WARE

1. Choose 100% Plant-Fiber Based. When choosing to purchase compostable-ware products, Athens recommends these items be unbleached and 100% plant-fiber based with NO coating, liner, or laminate made from bioplastic, petroleum plastic, or wax. Athens does not accept any level of bioplastic, including PLA and PHA. These 100% plant-fiber based products should be disposed of in an organics container that accepts food scraps and NEVER placed in a recycling container.

Non-Acceptable Plant-Fiber:

- Do not place rags, clothing, or other cloth/textiles in the organics container for composting. “Plant-fiber” means paper, not textiles.
- Athens does NOT accept biosolids or bathroom waste for composting, including tissues or bathroom paper towels.

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2. Bioplastics Are Not Accepted for Composting. Bioplastics refer to products or containers with coatings, liners, or laminates that look like plastic, but are solely made from plants. Bioplastics **should be disposed of in an Athens trash container**. When choosing to purchase bioplastic products, Athens recommends those that have been BPI certified. California state law prohibits the marketing of any plastic or bioplastic like material as “biodegradable, oxo-degradable, or photo-degradable;” avoid products marketed as such. Athens is unable to offer compostability testing for products.

3. Check with Your Suppliers First. In order to save money and time, prior to purchasing single-use disposables, Athens encourages businesses to first check with their suppliers to confirm 100% fiber-based standards.

SINGLE-USE DISPOSABLE PRODUCT RECOMMENDATIONS

Cold Cups – Made of CLEAR plastic resin #5 (PP) polypropylene or #1 (PET, PETE, rPET) Polyethylene Terephthalate.

Cold Lids – Made of CLEAR plastic resin #5 (PP) polypropylene or #1 (PET, PETE, rPET) Polyethylene Terephthalate.

Hot Cups

1. Encourage customers to bring their reusable mugs and offer a cup incentive.
2. Fiber based cups with a bioplastic coating/liner. (Dispose in trash.)
3. Currently, there is no product option available that is acceptable in the Athens recycling or organics container. Although hot cups with a bioplastic coating/liner should be placed in the trash, certified compostable items may be more environmentally friendly.

Hot Lids

1. Made with 100% plant-fiber based material.
2. Made of CLEAR or WHITE plastic resin #5 (PP) polypropylene or #1 (PET, PETE, rPET) Polyethylene Terephthalate.

Cold Plates and Hot Plates – 100% plant-fiber with no plastic or bioplastic coating.

Cold To-Go Clamshells (aka takeout containers)

1. Unbleached 100% plant-fiber.
2. Made of CLEAR or WHITE plastic resin #5 (PP) polypropylene or #1 (PET, PETE, rPET) Polyethylene Terephthalate.

Hot To-Go Clamshells (aka takeout containers)

1. Unbleached 100% plant-fiber.
2. If plastic version is preferred, utilize CLEAR or WHITE plastic resin #5 (PP) polypropylene or #1 (PET, PETE, rPET) Polyethylene Terephthalate.

Soup Bowl Container

1. Unbleached 100% plant-fiber.
2. Fiber based bowls with BPI certified bioplastic coating/liner. (Dispose in trash.)
3. Although hot bowls with a bioplastic coating/liner should be placed in the trash, certified compostable items may be more environmentally friendly.

Small Serving Cups with Lids (also called ramekins)

1. Unbleached 100% plant-fiber.
2. Made of CLEAR plastic resin #5 (PP) polypropylene. (This item is too small to be sorted for recycling.)

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Cutlery

1. Non-coated bamboo, wood, and other 100% plant-fiber based cutlery.
2. Note on plastic: Sorting utensils for recycling is very difficult and rarely happens. Athens recommends implementing reusable option and/or limiting free utensils (not combining utensils with take-out orders). Athens also does not recommend utensils that are bioplastic or polystyrene/plastic #6. If you chose to purchase plastic utensils, choose CLEAR or WHITE polypropylene/plastic #5 utensils with 100% recycled content.

Stir Sticks – Wood-based stir sticks or edible options like pasta can be composted. We do not recommend plastic, as they are too small to be sorted for recycling.

Straws – Athens recommends implementing a “straws upon request” policy and offering reusable straws, where possible. If disposable straws are necessary, Athens recommends 100% paper or other plant-fiber based options, which are not individually wrapped in plastic. Athens does not accept in their recycling or organics containers plastic and bioplastic (plant-based plastic) straws, including paper or plant fiber based options that use a bioplastic coating to prevent degradation.

Condiment and Sugar Packets – Athens suggests that condiments be dispensed in bulk where possible. Condiment packets (even if paper) are not recyclable. Paper packets are too small and may contain glues not suitable for composting.

Food-Soiled Paper Products – Examples include 100% plant-fiber based napkins, paper towels, and pizza boxes. Athens recommends paper products that are unbleached and made from 100% recycled paper content.

Food-soiled paper may be placed in an Athens organics container, if the following applies:

- Must be 100% plant-fiber based with NO coating, liner, or laminate made from bioplastic, petroleum plastic, or wax.
- Must be food-soiled ONLY with food and/or drink liquids.

Do NOT place these paper items in an Athens recycling or organics container

- Paper soiled with cleaning chemicals, hazardous waste, biosolids, animal waste, and/or any non-food related liquids.
- Bathroom waste, including tissues, bathroom paper towels, and personal hygiene products.
- Paper products (like coffee cups) with “compostable” liners, coatings, or laminates.
- Unused or unsoiled paper products. Businesses cannot dispose of unused napkins, paper towels, plates, cups, or other fiber food serving-ware in the organics container as a means of disposal. If a business intends to dispose of these materials instead of using them first (NOT recommended), the items must be placed in the landfill container. These paper items are not recyclable due to content type.

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