

# San Francisco Food Service Waste Reduction Ordinance

**This Ordinance (No. 295-06) is effective as of June 1, 2007**

## What does the new food service waste reduction ordinance require?

- San Francisco food vendors may not use polystyrene foam (or expanded polystyrene, such as Styrofoam) disposable food service ware.
- San Francisco food vendors must use biodegradable/compostable or recyclable disposable food service ware (unless it is durably reusable) if it is not more than 15% more expensive than non-biodegradable/compostable or non-recyclable disposables.

## Who has to follow the food service waste reduction ordinance?

- All food vendors, including restaurants, delis, fast-food services, coffee shops, juice bars, vendors at fairs, and food trucks, selling food prepared in San Francisco.
- All City Facilities and departments must also follow the ordinance.
- All City Contractors and Lessees that perform under a City contract or lease at City facilities

## What are acceptable biodegradable/compostable food service ware products?

- Coated and uncoated paper, cardboard, or other natural fiber (e.g., sugarcane) products, and “bio-based” plastic-like materials (such as from potato or corn based resin).
- Bio-based plastic-like products must be clearly labeled as compostable, preferably with green BPI\* symbol or other green lettering or marking, to distinguish them from traditional non-compostable plastics and to verify meeting ASTM-Standards under state requirements for compostable labeling (AB 2147 – 2006).

## What are recyclable food service ware products?

- Foil and other aluminum containers and plastics (such as #2, #4 or #5 cups) and other containers that are accepted in San Francisco’s recycling collection program.

## Where can compostable or recyclable food service ware products be purchased?

- Ask your current supplier about products that meet the City’s new requirements.
- Sources for compostable food service ware on this [Compostable Products List](#).

## What can you do to reduce food service ware waste?

- Allow customers to bring their own mugs or reusable to-go containers for take out use.
- Charge customers a fee to cover any additional costs for alternative take out containers.
- Use reusable service ware instead of disposable ones for eat-in customers.

## What can you do to compost food service ware or packaging?

- Encourage your customers to put compostable to-go containers in their home compost or green bin (if they have food composting collection service).
- Participate in the food composting collection service at your business to turn food scraps and compostable food packaging or service ware into compost. Call your service provider to request composting collection service: Golden Gate Disposal & Recycling at **626-4000** or Sunset Scavenger at **330-1300**.

## What is wrong with polystyrene foam (e.g., Styrofoam)?

Made from oil and like all conventional plastics, polystyrene foam is non-renewable, non-biodegradable, and virtually non-recyclable. Polystyrene foam food service ware ends up in landfills, waterways or the ocean. It breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, which are often mistaken for food and ingested by marine animals, birds, and fish. Medical evidence also suggests that chemicals in polystyrene foam are carcinogenic and may leach into food or drink.

## Why did San Francisco adopt the food service waste reduction ordinance?

Food service ware is a large contributor to litter, blight and waste throughout San Francisco. In addition, many food service ware products made from plastic may be hazardous to our health. To make our city cleaner and healthier and help our community achieve zero waste, San Francisco has adopted this innovative [food service waste reduction ordinance](#). Similar ordinances are being adopted elsewhere California.

## Are there any exemptions to the ordinance requirements?

There is no exemption to the prohibition of using polystyrene foam for disposable food service ware. Non-biodegradable/compostable or non-recyclable products may only be used if the food vendor can show that the alternatives available are more than 15% more expensive.

## What are the penalties for non-compliance?

Violations may result in fines: 1<sup>st</sup> time = warning, 2<sup>nd</sup> time = \$100, 3<sup>rd</sup> time = \$200, 4<sup>th</sup> or more time = \$500. Enforcement is by the City of San Francisco and will be in part complaint driven, meaning your customers may notify the City of violations.

## What assistance is available from the City to comply with the ordinance?

San Francisco Department of the Environment staff and their consultants are available to assist food vendors on finding suitable alternative food service ware options, in addition to providing on-site training and assistance to participate in composting collection. By eliminating non-biodegradable/compostable food service ware your business may be able to more easily compost food scraps, food-soiled paper products such as napkins, wax-coated cardboard boxes or cartons, and any compostable food service ware. Your business may be able to divert more waste from the landfill and thereby reduce trash service costs.

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\* BPI is the Biodegradable Product Institute, the sole U.S. based certification agency for compostable products.  
[www.bpiworld.org](http://www.bpiworld.org)