

## Reuse, Refill, Reduce, Refuse – Some easy as ways to avoid or minimise single-use waste in hospitality.

There are four big offenders in the overpopulated world of single-use: Plastic water bottles, disposable coffee cups, plastic straws and plastic bags. Here are some suggestions of how to avoid or minimise them or their impacts.

Before we even begin, running trials, and making sure it is known, then asking for customer for their feedback is a great way to get your locals behind your sustainability initiatives from the start. This can help avoid customers feeling that they aren't being considered at all. They are special to us. So is their planet. Letting them know that is why we are working to make changes can be the beginning of some wonderful collaborations.

### Single-use water bottles

- **Avoid:** Don't stock or sell them. Many of you offer free water to customers – glasses and water carafes placed in the café. We can go an extra step and offer to refill water flasks or bottles for all, customers and non-customers alike. UYOC give you the option to make this known on your listing.
- **Avoid:** Today, you can put up a sign letting locals and visitors know you will refill water bottles for free. Encourage customer responsibility. Give locals and visitors another reason to walk through your door. Kindness and common sense are tangible and saleable commodities in today's changing, conscious consumer climate.
- **Minimise:** If we have to sell bottled water at all, choose a company like **For The Better Good**. These kiwi guys provide us with plant based plastic bottles, filled with New Zealand water. We all know that plant based, compostable or biodegradable plastic is just expensive green wash unless it can be properly recovered and transported to a

**commercial facility that has the equipment to deal with it. For The Better Good, and there may be others like them now, differ in that they require that all stockists agree to be refill points (you can safely refill plant plastic without fear of chemical leaching) so the bottles are used over and over again, but also require all stockists to be 'better collection partners', accepting used (and reused) bottles that the company will come and physically take away, ensuring the product reaches an appropriate facility. They also donate 20c from each bottle sold to sustainable coastlines. We're into this concept. It isn't single-use.**

## Single-use take-out coffee & drinks cups

- **Avoid:** And this will almost definitely be the way things go. Circular, no waste systems are springing up globally with huge success. So, you can begin your own 'cup swap' or cup library system. Or get in touch with UYOC and we can email information of the schemes that are already in existence in New Zealand, where you can purchase reusable stock, designed and branded for this purpose, and information on the best way to make it work for you. Some cafes prefer to act as lone wolves, implementing a system where their locals return the loaned cups to their café. Others choose to be part of a larger network, where the cup a customer takes from you can be returned to any café participating in the same scheme, and so on. We can help you find something that works for you.
- **Avoid: Don't use them at all. Many cafes across New Zealand are deciding to just go without. And they are finding it works just fine for them. Some lose initial custom, but they report that new customers seek them out specifically because they have made this commitment, and it balances out. Contact us and we will put you in touch with UYOC businesses who have ditched disposables and are happy to share their experiences with you.**
- **Avoid:** Encourage customers to stay and drink in, or to adopt the very Italian style of drinking milk free and fast. Think about a 'coffee bar' area, with a dedicated barista, for customers who will come in, order an espresso, slam it, leave the change on the counter and then walk out. Use your social media to encourage this. Use signage. We love signage! Offer discounts for in-house espresso slammers.
- **Minimise: Add a surcharge on to disposable cups. This can cover your stock costs as well as act as a deterrent to customers.**
- **Minimise:** Offer a discount to those who choose to bring reusables. This isn't as effective as a surcharge, but is gentler on the customer if we are trying to change a habit and mind set.

- **Minimise: Add a surcharge (perhaps 50c) but also give a discount (perhaps 20c). This is probably the most effective way to cajole customers financially into making the change.**
- **Avoid: Sell reusable cups.** UYOC can give you advice about pricing, environmental integrity, benefits of design and materials, and demographic appeal. Or give reusable vessels away – jam jars, peanut butter jars with attractive lids, coconut yoghurt jars with easy peel off labels – you know who we mean! Put them through the machine and offer them to customers through prominent display and signage. Great for coffees, juices and smoothies.

## Single-use plastic straws

- **Avoid: Ditch them.** Either be entirely straw free, or have machine washable, metal, reusable straws for customer use. We can give you some info of stockists, easy peasy.
- **Avoid: Use hospo grade paper straws, ideally sourced from a stockist who does not also sell plastic straws. Remember that ‘eco biodegradable and compostable’ plant based plastic straws have to be commercially composted to be ‘compostable’. If they make their way into our waters and oceans, they will bob around for many, many years, a menace to our wildlife and a bad look for green New Zealand. They will not break down by the side of the road or in landfill into plant matter – they are just more landfill. They are not a green option.**
- **Minimise: If you use paper straws, or regular or plant based plastic straws, do not give them out. Use signage to inform customers that straws are ‘on request’. This will reduce the amount of straws that you use, balancing out the extra cost of paper straws versus plastic straws. Some cafes have paper straws for sale, 50c, with proceeds donated to a local charity. Nice.**
- **Avoid: Sell reusable straws to your customers. They make great gifts and at Christmas, all the cafes we know who stock them, sell out! Companies, like Caliwoods Eco, sell retail stands to cafes. These are counter tops stands that contain several multi packs of metal straws and cleaning brushes, that you can sell at a retail price. Guys like Forever Straw Co sell glamour metal straws in individual carry pouches. This puts the responsibility back with the customer. Also nice.**

## Plastic bags

- **Avoid:** This is pretty much the best way to go. All plastic bags, including 'compostable/biodegradable' plastic bags are a hazard if they find their way into our water ways, and they invariably do. The alternative? As with all these initiatives, working with customers to create a feeling of shared responsibility is key. If you can afford to offer small discounts to take away customers who bring their own bags or take out containers, do so, and shout about it! Social media loves this.

## The power of the sign

Using a well placed and highly visible sign to communicate the options, initiatives and partnerships you offer your customers is so good. Not only does it deliver the information without putting staff in the 'firing line', it spreads the message to others in the industry. If they copy you, brilliant. We're all in this together.

These signs can be downloaded from the UYOC website, but I've yet to meet a barista who can't also moonlight as a sign writer!



## Big little extras...

- Consider a move away from Tetrapak options for your non-dairy milks? Companies like Vigour Vitality have a huge range of nut, seeds and specialised Barista blends, that are raw, activated, do a superb job and are sold in returnable, reusable glass containers. They minimise wastage as they are 'made up' when required.
- **Encourage folks, through a well-placed sign, to use their own containers for food take outs. This will empower them to make the change as well as cut down on your packaging stock costs. Tubs, even just a bowl or a plate for the walk back to work. Go the next step and loan containers or op shop crockery and cutlery in exchange for a deposit?**
- Do you have a food share, or food bank, or shelter network in your community who would be able to distribute unsold baking etc at the end of the day to those who would truly appreciate it so much? Get in touch with us and we will do the searching for you if this is something you'd like to participate in, or even begin.
- **Talk to waste management services in your area. Is there a commercial facility that will take your food scraps for composting? Is this a facility that can handle plant-based, plastic-lined cups too? If you use these 'eco' products, like Ecoware and Innocent, you can try and get customers to return them to a special bin that you provide to be collected by a waste management provider?**
- Is there a local community gardening club in your area who would love your food scraps for their compost? Or an animal rescue sanctuary with pigs and chooks who would demolish your food waste and keep it out of land fill? We will happily search out groups and options for you, or help build a network in your area. Get in touch.

**Thank you, for making things change**