



Guide to Compostables

When reducing single-use plastic, it's important to find environmentally preferable materials that can replace the products you're already using. While reduction and reuse are the most preferable options, recycling and organics recycling are better waste management strategies than waste-to-energy or landfilling.

Some single-use plastics are recyclable. Locally, our recycling facilities accept clean plastics labeled #1, #2, and #5. It is important that these plastics are larger than fist or post-it note size, AND that they are not black plastics to ensure they are accurately sorted in our facilities.



The case for compostables

While recycling is preferable to organics recycling, choosing compostable products for single-use foodware might be a better option in places where organics recycling is widely available. Since single-use foodware often becomes food soiled, customers may choose not to clean out these containers in order to recycle them. However, food soiled compostable products can be disposed as they are –without cleaning– in organics recycling. Additionally, while not all single-use plastic foodware products can be recycled (for example sauce ramekins, black plastics, plastics #3, #4, #6, #7), as long as all compostable products have proper certification they can all be confidently disposed in organics recycling. This makes disposal messaging to customers much easier and less likely to result in contamination.



What is compostable?

There's a lot of language when it comes to compostable products. Biodegradable, plant-based, eco-friendly – the list goes on. This variety of language can make it tricky to understand which products are truly compostable, and which are just greenwashing. Luckily, there is a certification that confirms a product's compostability in industrial facilities that food businesses can trust when making purchasing decisions.

Greenwashing is a tactic used by companies to make their products or services seem more environmentally friendly than they actually are.

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) is a third party organization that provides technically and scientifically credible certifications for material compostability. Products that are BPI Certified Compostable have passed a testing process that verifies the product is able to break down into compost at industrial facilities. Additionally, it verifies these products are not made with organic fluorinated chemicals (PFAS), which are forever chemicals that have been shown to have impacts on human health.



Food businesses can ensure they have purchased certified compostable products by looking for the BPI logo. You can also search for specific products and companies on BPI's website.

But wait, there's more!

In addition to BPI Certified products, any organic product that is not poly-lined is also compostable. This includes any paper, wood, or bamboo products such as napkins, paper towels, wood/bamboo utensils, and food soiled paper food ware. As long as the product does not have a lining these food soiled paper products can be disposed through organics recycling.

Poly-lined means the product has a coating that is made from plastic to prevent leaks. Unless a paper product is certified compostable, a shiny film or lining on a paper product is likely plastic.

If you have any questions about what is compostable, or if you'd like any support finding BPI Certified Compostable products, the MNimize team would be happy to help! Keep in mind that you may be eligible for the MNimize Rebate to receive up to \$500 toward the cost of replacing single-use plastic products with BPI certified compostable alternatives. Reach out to the MNimize team today to learn more!



Ready to ditch single-use plastic? We're here to help!
Visit our contact page and we'll be in touch to learn more about your business and help you identify reduction opportunities.
Or, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out directly at hello@mnimize.org.