



Single Use Plastic Reduction Guide


Single-use plastic is fairly common in food service, so it can be challenging to figure out how to reduce plastic consumption. This guide provides an overview of how to reduce single-use plastic in your business. If you're interested in more specific recommendations or if you'd like to become one of our participating businesses, reach out to MNimize and our team will come on-site to help you identify reduction and replacement opportunities.





Dine In

Offer on-site dining? Take a look at the serviceware you provide to customers. If you have dishwashing equipment (three compartment sink or commercial dishwasher), you should be able to provide fully reusable serviceware for these dine-in customers.



If you don't currently have a commercial dishwasher but you're interested in offering reusables for dine-in, you may be eligible for a Hennepin County Waste Prevention grant to purchase and install a dishwasher and transition to reusable dishware. The MNimize team can assist you through the application process.

MNimize will offer up to \$500 to eligible businesses toward the cost of replacing single-use plastic products with reusable or BPI certified compostable alternatives.

In addition to reusable plates/bowls, cups, and utensils, for on-site dining, you can also swap plastic condiment cups for metal ramekins and single-use straws for a reusable option. There are even baskets designed to keep reusable straws contained in the dishwasher.

If concerned about losing reusable flatware, ramekins, or straws in the trash or organics, consider adding a magnetic lid to your bins to capture these items as tables are bussed and plates are scraped.

Once you've tackled serviceware, take a look at other customer facing items that might end up in the trash. Could you replace condiment, sweetener, and other single-use packets with bulk dispensers?





To Go

Now that you've managed all on-site serviceware, it's time to look at what leaves your doors. From delivery to curbside pickup, ordering to go has become its own dining experience for customers. And it's an experience with a lot of packaging.

The easiest place to start with your to go packaging is to assess your accessories. Are you providing utensils, condiment packets, and straws with every to go order? In many cases, customers neither want nor need these accessories, so consider offering them upon request only. We encourage this through our MNimize Pledge! Make sure to train your staff on this new policy, and educate your customers through signage, social media, and conversation.

After accessories, take a look at your to go containers. Could you replace single-use plastic containers with BPI certified compostable alternatives? The MNimize team can help you inventory your current to go containers and research compostable alternatives that will maintain the quality of your food at a comparable price.



The Biodegradable Products Institute is the leading body that certifies whether a product is compostable in an industrial facility. Products need to be BPI certified in order to be accepted in Minnesota composting facilities.

Feeling really ambitious? Look into offering a reusable to go option. You could either start your own reusable to go program by purchasing sturdy containers made from stainless steel or a thicker plastic, or you could connect with a third party provider. In Minnesota, two companies, [Foreverware](#) and [r.Ware](#), provide containers and a technology platform to manage your reusable inventory.

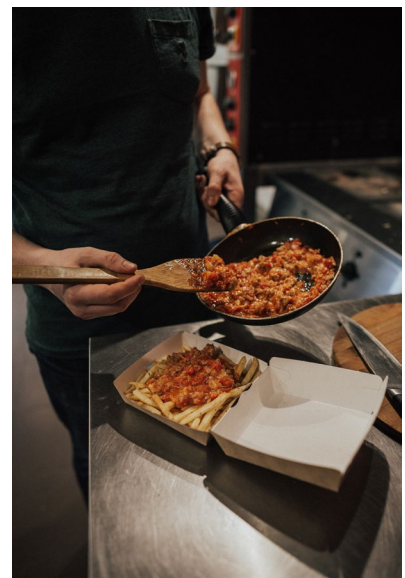
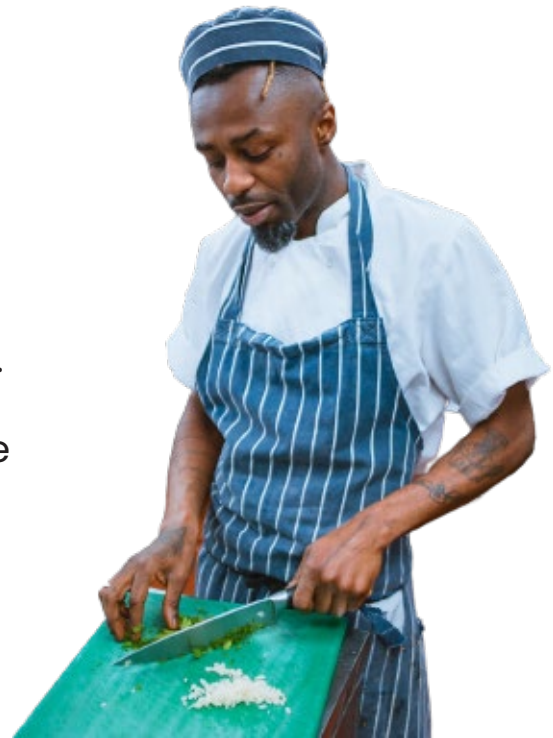
Want to let customers use their own containers? Per the state food code, it is safe and legal to refill a customer's reusable beverage container. Consider offering a discount or incentive for customers to bring their own mug or bottle!

Back of House

If you've achieved a single-use plastic free Front of House and want to do more, why not turn your attention to the kitchen and your suppliers?

In our polling of the food service business community, the two most commonly used back of house plastics were stretch film and gloves. This probably isn't surprising – film is very important for food prep and gloves are essential per health code. But...they aren't the only options: plastic film could be replaced with reusable containers/lids and there are BPI certified compostable gloves on the market.

Another common source of back of house single-use plastic actually comes from supplier packaging. If you notice excess packaging, or if you can think of other ways to package products to reduce single-use plastic, reach out to your supplier to let them know or consider other suppliers with reusable or minimal packaging.



Celebrate Your Efforts!

Making change can be difficult, so when you've completed a single-use plastic reduction action, be sure to celebrate! Let your customers know that minimizing plastic is important to your business and tell them what you've done to achieve your goals.

MNimize also wants to help you celebrate! When you've completed single-use plastic reduction actions, we'll confirm your achievement tier and add you to our directory of participating restaurants. We'll also help you calculate the impact of your efforts, including an estimate of how many plastic items you'll avoid and costs you'll save annually.



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.