

REUSABLE CONTAINER QUICKSTART GUIDE

Created by:



WHY REUSABLE CONTAINERS?

The U.S. generates over 14.5 million tons of plastic packaging per year, but only about 14% of it is recycled. Single-use containers are littering our streets and choking our waterways, but they're also bad business. An average reusable container with a cost of \$5 can be used 1,000 times, compared with a cost of \$250 for 875 comparable single-use containers.

Making the transition to reusables makes both economic and environmental sense.

PHILADELPHIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH RULES

Existing businesses

- May offer reusable containers immediately
- Inspections occur at next scheduled annual Food Establishment Inspection

New businesses

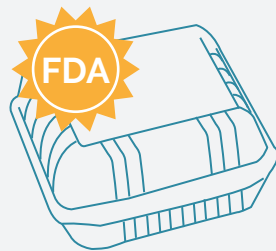
- Must declare they are using reusable containers on Food Establishment Plan Review
- Reusable container system will be inspected during initial inspection

All food establishments are expected to follow FDA guidelines for acceptable containers, washing, drying and storage.

GETTING STARTED WITH REUSABLES

1

Purchase FDA-approved reusable containers.



(Reusable containers should be certified according to the [NSF Protocol P386: Food Storage Containers for Home Use.](#))

Container Requirements

- Made of durable material (not cardboard or single-use)
- Corrosion resistant
- Non-absorbent
- Chip and scratch resistant
- Designed to prevent food from harboring/collecting bacteria
- Commercial dishwasher safe

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Implement proper washing and drying procedures.



For more information:
See full guidelines document on Circular Philadelphia [website here.](#)

FDA Washing and Drying Guidelines

DAILY BASIS

Automated

- Must automatically dispense detergent & sanitizer
- Minimum wash tank temps:
 - 150°F - 165°F (high temp sanitization)
 - 120°F (chemical sanitization)
- Minimum final rinse temp (high temp sanitization: 180°F)

Drying

Containers **MUST** be fully air dried before stacking to prevent pathogenic growth.

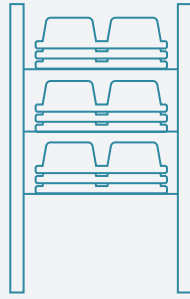
Manual

- Use triple basin. One sink for:
 - Washing (detergent required)
 - Rinsing
 - Sanitizing
- Minimum wash sink temp: 110°F
- Fully submerge ware in chemical sanitizer sink for 7-30 seconds depending on type of chemical

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3

Set up sanitary storage and distribution systems.



Storage Guidelines

- Rinse containers from customer to leave as little food residue as possible until washing.
- After cleaning, transport and store all reusable wares to ensure complete drainage.
- Store dry reusables inverted, if possible, on or in NSF-certified racks or bins (enclosed, if possible) to protect from contamination.

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Tell your customers, and train your staff.



Tips for Success

- Make it easy for customers to return containers.
- Share the environmental benefits of switching to reusables with customers.
- Hold regular, quick "refresher" training sessions for staff on how the reusables process works.
- Use signage and color coding to make the process easy for staff and safe for the customer.

Have more questions about getting started with reusable containers?

We and our partners can help.

REUSABLE CONTAINER RESOURCES

Circular Philadelphia makes resources available on its website to help restaurants and food businesses offer reusable containers to customers. Visit the Reusable Containers page at:

<https://circularphiladelphia.org/programs/market-transformation/food-systems/reusable-containers/>

ECHO Systems designs integrative models to replace everyday single use plastic items with convenient reusable options. Their programs are designed to grow on the local level, seed community engagement, increase awareness, and generate solutions. Visit their website at ourechosystem.com or contact them directly at admin@ourechosystem.com.

