



Boomerang Alliance is the peak Australian not-for-profit organisation for waste and plastic pollution. We run the successful Plastic Free Places program, which has helped communities eliminate over 5 million pieces of single-use plastic! [www.plasticfreeplaces.org](http://www.plasticfreeplaces.org)

## A cafe owner's guide to compostable takeaway/ delivery packaging

As we write this we see many businesses struggling to cope and thinking of ways to keep going in these difficult times. Many food retailers are looking to provide takeaway and delivery options - and for some of you this is new. We know you still care about the environment and want to keep aligned to those values.

So here are some tips on providing sustainable packaging and ways to save you money to help your bottom line.

While **reusables are the best option and there is no evidence to suggest that they are any less safe to use than disposables**, we do understand that businesses may want a disposable option for now, so here we'll focus only on compostables.

However please do still consider reusables - refer to our [companion guide to using reusable foodware during Covid-19](#).

*please note: we don't benefit commercially from any brands or products we recommend.*



## TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS

● For food taken home, **home compostable packaging is the best option** as this can be placed in backyard composting. Look for **100% home compostable packaging** made of bagasse (sugarcane), paper or cardboard - ensure the latter two aren't lined with plastic or bioplastic though.

As a second preference, choose items that are commercially compostable (like bioplastics), though these cannot be composted at home.

● If your food is hot or likely to leak - bagasse (sugarcane pulp) is your best choice. It is leak-proof, freezer-proof, microwavable, home compostable and will keep your food hot. Ensure you **check the fitting on the lids** - bagasse lids are secured with tabs. If you need a better fitting lid, try a clear PLA bioplastic lid (look for the embossed symbol 7 and/or PLA). This will fit snugly - though PLA is not home compostable. **Clear PLA does not like heat** though, so if your food is steaming hot, you may have to use a plastic lid for safety. In this case, at least your container is sustainable.

For soups, an alternative is a PLA lined bowl with a CPLA (heat resistant PLA) lid - however **neither are home compostable**.

● For food that is not wet, cardboard is an option. There are also cardboard containers with bioplastic lining available, which will allow for wet food (even hot food). The **lining is not home compostable** - so for wet food we prefer to avoid the lining and stick with bagasse.



[BioPak 750 ml cane base & lid](#)



[Biopak soup bowl/CPLA lid](#)



[BioPak board clamshell](#)



[BioPak noodle box \(lined\)](#)

● For sauce containers, look for **sugarcane options with a PLA bioplastic lid**. Be careful not to order a plastic lid - again look for the **7/PLA symbols**. Avoid single-use sauce sachets, they are a waste. Order your sauce in bulk and decant into sugarcane options or directly onto the food.



[BioPak cane sauce cup/PLA lid](#)

## CUTLERY

● For cutlery, **bamboo/ wood is the best option**. Avoid PLA options here, they are not home compostable and do not break down effectively in landfill or the environment.



[BioPak wood cutlery](#)

## COFFEE CUPS & LIDS

● For coffee cups, look for **PLA lined paper cup** options and make sure your cup is **compostable**.

For lids, choose a bagasse (sugarcane) or PLA lid. Bagasse is home compostable and cheaper than PLA. Currently, only the brand [Greenmark](#) makes bagasse lids - check with your local suppliers to see if they stock this brand.



[Greenmark wood cutlery](#)



Bagasse (best)



PLA (better)



PS (avoid)

## COLD CUPS, LIDS & STRAWS

● For cold cups and straws - look for compostable **PLA lined paper cup options**. The best option is actually large single-walled coffee cups. Clear PLA cold cups are also available as the next best option. Match either of these with a PLA lid.

For straws, paper is the best option (today's good quality paper straws hold up well in drinks), but we suggest only including a straw when necessary.



[Biopak paper straws](#)



[BioPak 16oz coffee cup](#)



[BioPak matching PLA lid](#)



[Vegware 'Hula cup' with matching lid](#)

## REDUCING TO SAVE MONEY & WASTE

● **Consider what you are giving out** and whether it is needed. For example, most customers will be eating at home and will not need cutlery. Many businesses default to providing cutlery, but this is often just wasting resources. We suggest you have them on hand at the delivery point and **only offer if requested or needed**.

● Only offer bags and straws on **request** or where needed.

● **Rethink what you're using to see where you can cut down**. For e.g. are you using a snap top burger box when a paper bag will do? If someone needs cutlery - are you giving away whole sets when people only want a fork? You can reduce by considering if your packaging is **fit-for-purpose**.

● If your item has a side sauce, you may be able to include the sauce container inside with the food, saving the need for a lid.

## SOURCING PRODUCTS

Ensure the packaging you buy is certified **compostable, preferably under the Australian Composting Standards** (the AS 5810 for home compostable or the AS 4736 for commercially compostable). If not available, then look for European or US standards. If the products are not certified, **there is no evidence that they are compostable.**

In this guide we have used some branded products as a reference, but there are a **number of other good brands available**, and you can source these through local distributors.

Often it's a case of contacting yours and simply changing your products, using this as a guide.

You can also order online with many major brands. Be careful though, **there are many products out there that pose as 'green'**, but are in fact anything but. Don't be fooled by the words like 'biodegradable' or 'eco' - many plastic products are marketed using these words.

The main thing to remember is to ensure you are purchasing **100% certified compostable.**

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### CORONAVIRUS & HEALTH ADVICE FOR CAFES

For information see the [Australian Government's Information Factsheet for Employers.](#)

## HOW TO MANAGE TAKEAWAY PACKAGING AT HOME

By providing 100% compostable packaging you are **doing the right thing** - you are reducing your environmental footprint and using products not made from fossil fuels.

The question is what is the **best option for households** when discarding that packaging? All takeaway packaging is a problem for households, mainly due to a lack of clear packaging certification, the best bin to use and the fact that different locations have different services and requirements.

In areas with a kerbside organics collection, the issue is simple. All discarded food and compostable packaging can go in the kerbside organics bin for collection.

Everywhere else things are more complicated. The best option for households is to put any **home compostable packaging in their home compost**. If they don't have one, this is a good chance to set one up. If this is not an option then paper based (including bagasse) home compostable packaging can go in the recycling bin, provided it is clean of food. Anything commercially compostable (i.e. products containing PLA bioplastics) has to go into the red garbage bin.

This is not an ideal situation, but changing our practice away from single-use plastics will take time. We need **local authorities to provide a kerbside FOGO** (Food Organics/ Garden Organics) collection service. This would solve the problem for compostable packaging taken home, as households could put all their organic waste into a collection bin that will be taken to a local compost facility. Such a service would reduce household waste-to-landfill by about 50%.

