



Circular Solutions to Takeout Packaging in Middletown

We all appreciate Connecticut's beauty, and so we all want to do our parts to mitigate the state's waste. With over 2,400,000 tons of waste disposed of every year, it's time for residents and businesses to start making small changes with a big impact. If each of the 47,000 residents of Middletown, Connecticut committed to replacing single-use takeout containers with reusable containers just one time a month, we would keep over 35,200 pounds of waste out of our processing facilities, waterways, and environment.

Using reusable containers can save your restaurant money

Reusable containers have an initial investment cost with the potential for over 1,000 uses per unit. Loyalty programs with [discounts for customers using reusable containers](#) encourage patrons to choose your restaurant for their next meal.

Connecticut Food Code - Requirements for Reusable Containers

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

1.

Purchase FDA-approved reusable containers

(Containers must be designed and constructed for reuse and in accordance with the requirements specified under Part 4-1 and 4-2 of the code.)



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

2.

Implement proper washing and drying procedures



FDA Washing and Drying Guidelines

DAILY BASIS

Automated

- Must automatically dispense detergent and 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

Manual

- Use triple basin. One sink each 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

Drying

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

3.

Set up sanitary storage and distribution systems



Storage Guidelines

- Rinse containers from customers 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 (enclose, if possible) to protect from contamination

4.

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 reusable process works
- Use signage and color coding to make the process easy for staff and safe for customers

Be a part of something big

Middletown is a leader in waste-reduction initiatives. In 2019, the City focused on banning single-use plastic bags at all checkout counters. In 2020, Middletown implemented restaurant waste diversion programs that kept over 250,000 pounds of food waste out of landfills. Middletown now aims to reduce single use takeout containers through a sustainable system that benefits customers, restaurant owners, and the environment.

Additional Resources

- [Philadelphia Health Department Change Paves the Way for Reusable Containers at Food Businesses](#)
- [2015 Statewide Waste Characterization Study - 2,332,598 tons 2015 study \(2013 data\)](#)
- [Circular Philadelphia information on reusable containers](#)
- [5 Easy Steps to Reduce Plastic & Benefit Your Business - Product Stewardship Institute](#)

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3-304.17 Refilling Returnables. (A) Except as specified in (B) - (E) of this section, empty containers returned to a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT for cleaning and refilling with FOOD shall be cleaned and refilled in a regulated FOOD PROCESSING PLANT. P (B) A take-home FOOD container returned to a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT may be refilled at a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT with FOOD if the FOOD container is: (1) Designed and constructed for reuse and in accordance with the requirements specified under Part 4-1 and 4-2; P (2) One that was initially provided by the FOOD ESTABLISHMENT to the CONSUMER, either empty or filled with FOOD by the FOOD ESTABLISHMENT, for the purpose of being returned for reuse; (3) Returned to the FOOD ESTABLISHMENT by the CONSUMER after use; (4) Subject to the following steps before being refilled with FOOD: (a) Cleaned as specified under Part 4-6 of this Code, (b) Sanitized as specified under Part 4-7 of this Code; P and (c) Visually inspected by a FOOD EMPLOYEE to verify that the container, as returned, meets the requirements specified under Part 4-1 and 4-2. P (C) A take-home FOOD container returned to a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT may be refilled at a FOOD ESTABLISHMENT with BEVERAGE if: (1) The beverage is not a time/temperature control for safety food; (2) The design of the container and of the rinsing equipment and the nature of the beverage, when considered together, allow effective cleaning at home or in the food establishment; (3) Facilities for rinsing before refilling returned containers with fresh, hot water that is under pressure and not recirculated are provided as part of the dispensing system; (4) The consumer-owned container returned to the food establishment for refilling is refilled for sale or service only to the same consumer; and (5) The container is refilled by: (a) An EMPLOYEE of the FOOD ESTABLISHMENT, or (b) The owner of the container if the BEVERAGE system includes a contamination-free transfer process as specified under 4- 204.13(A), (B), and (D) that cannot be bypassed by the container owner. (D) Consumer-owned, personal take-out BEVERAGE containers, such as thermally insulated bottles, nonspill coffee cups, and promotional BEVERAGE glasses, may be refilled by EMPLOYEES or the CONSUMER if refilling is a contamination-free process as specified under 4-204.13(A), (B), and (D). (E) CONSUMER-owned containers that are not FOOD-specific may be filled at a water VENDING MACHINE or system.