



COUNTY OF MARIN

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE FOOD PACKAGING & POLYSTYRENE BAN ORDINANCE

Effective January 1, 2010; enforcement begins June 2010

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does the Ordinance Require?

- All retail food vendors, restaurants, and County facilities can no longer provide prepared or take-out food in, on or with disposable food packaging that contains polystyrene (Styrofoam).

- Biodegradable food packaging is required when using disposable food packaging, which includes cold cups, lids, plates, hinge containers, bowls, trays, cartons, cups, cutlery, straws, bags.



What's Wrong With Plastic?

- Plastics in general are difficult to recycle due to the lack of an after-market demand for the materials.
- Plastics do not biodegrade, but instead photo-degrade. The plastic particles become smaller and smaller, eventually microscopic, and accumulate in aquatic systems. Plastics and polystyrene can be found across the spectrum of the aquatic food chain, from the cells of plankton up to the land-mass sized accumulation in the Pacific Gyre, pieces often mistaken by birds and fish as food. That is how plastic ends up in fish caught for human consumption.

What's Wrong with Polystyrene?

- Styrene, a compound in Styrofoam, is a known hazardous substance and a suspected carcinogen. It leaches from containers into the food or liquid it contains, and is detectable in the tissue of every man, woman & child in the U.S.
- In California, 165,000 tons of polystyrene are used for food packaging annually.
- Polystyrene "can have serious impacts on human health, wildlife, the environment, and the economy," according to the EPA.
- Polystyrene does not bio-degrade and there is no meaningful recycling.
- The polystyrene manufacturing process is the 5th largest creator of hazardous waste, and ranks second in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Which Containers are Allowed?

- **Durable Ware:** The best choice for the environment is to re-use, so consider washable food service whenever possible.
- **Bio-plastics and compostables**, certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI). (See reverse).
- **Uncoated Paper and Coated Paper**, if coating is BPI certified.
- Cardboard

Do Alternatives Cost More?

In many cases, the environmentally preferable alternatives are the same cost as the conventional products, and in some cases, they cost less. For alternatives that are more expensive, a small "take-out" fee can cover the cost of eco-friendly containers.

What are the penalties for Non-Compliance?

The first violation is \$108; the 2nd violation is \$324; and \$541 for each additional violation.

EASY WAYS TO MAKE THE CHANGE

A Step-By-Step Guide

STEP ONE: Ask your current sales representative for help finding an environmentally preferable alternative. If they don't currently carry what you are looking for, ask them to begin. Try to find locally available products first. The table at the bottom of the page shows some of the many sources of environmentally preferable disposable food packaging, some local distributors, followed by national vendors.

STEP TWO: Form a local purchasing cooperative and obtain 'national pricing' for local members. Further information can be obtained by contacting Mary Clark Bartlett, CEO of the Epicurean Group, mary@epicurean-group.com

STEP THREE: Look who's already made the switch! Talk to them: how they did it, how easy it was and how much their customers appreciate it: The Fairfax Scoop * Sol Food Restaurants * Café Gratitude * Marin Farmers' Markets * Marin Center and County Fair * Whipper Snapper * and more....

Sources for Environmentally Preferable Alternatives

Company	Website	City, State	Products
Excellent Packaging	www.excellentpackaging.com	Richmond, CA	Bowls, plates, cups, soup containers, utensils
World Centric	http://worldcentric.org	Palo Alto, CA	Bowls, plates, cups, , clamshells, utensils
Green Earth Office Supply	http://greenearthofficesupply	Redwood Estates & Santa Clara, CA	Bowls, plates, cups, soup containers, utensils, straws, trash bags, stir sticks
Mr. Take Out Bags	www.mrtakeoutbags.com	Pittsburgh, PA	Bags, plates, cups, cutlery, lids
Let's Go Green	http://letsgogreen.biz	Snellville, GA	Cups, soup containers
Food Service Warehouse	www.foodservicewarehouse.com	Greenwood Village, CO	Cups, bowls, plates, cutlery, napkins, straws
Aardvark Paper Straws	http://www.aardvarkstraws.com/	Ft. Wayne, IN	Straws, stir sticks

This is a very short list of companies that provide environmentally preferable packaging and are listed for reference only. The County of Marin does not endorse any specific business. A complete listing of products certified by Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) can be found here:

<http://www.bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved/2.html>

Original research and text for this FAQ brochure provided by Marin County Youth Commission.

Contact the Environmental Health Services Division at the County of Marin: 499-6907