



New 3-Step Guide Helps Restaurants Prevent Plastic Pollution

June 7, 2018

Eight of the top 10 global contributors to plastic pollution are single-use food service plastics like bottles and caps, straws and stirrers, carryout bags, and take-out containers. Today, the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI) released 3 Steps to Reduce Plastic and Benefit Your Business: A Guide for Restaurants & Eateries to reduce these top littered products at the source.

The Guide contains best practices to reduce plastic, advises how to avoid costly common pitfalls and find truly sustainable products, and features tangible examples from four pilot restaurants. It also offers an online Plastic Footprint Tool and a Foodware Cost Calculator to help business owners estimate the costs of plastic items and project savings achievable with plastic reduction strategies. In addition, the Guide presents simple ways communities can educate the public about plastic and even take legislative action on products like bags, bottles, and straws.

Kassata Bollman, co-owner of brunch restaurant Bruce & Son, said, "People notice when you ditch plastic for nicer products. The cost is only a matter of cents - in fact, we save money in the long run by giving out fewer disposable items and using all reusable tableware."

"Whether your business is right on the water or far from the coast, you will benefit from plastic reduction," said Megan Byers, PSI Associate for Policy, Programs, and Outreach, author of the Guide. "There is confusion in the restaurant industry about what is sustainable - this Guide will help you make smart decisions."

The Guide is informed by an 18-month "Trash Free Waters" pilot project with restaurants in Greenport, NY: Bruce & Son (progressive brunch place), Little Creek Oysters (fresh seafood), Lucharitos (taqueria and bar), and Tikal (family-style traditional South American restaurant). Together, these four restaurants prevented about 1 million plastic items per year; saved \$12,610 annually through plastic reduction and reduced commercial waste hauling fees; and reduced 7,860 pounds of plastic waste annually. Other reported benefits include:

- * At least one business noticed increased business - plastic reduction attracted new customers
- * Customers enjoy the enhanced atmosphere and dining experience
- * Increased operational efficiency and saved staff time
- * Don't have to order disposables as often or worry about inventory
- * No straws = clog-free sinks
- * Competitive branding advantage due to unique plastic-free take-out products

"It is tempting to reorder the same supplies as you've always done. But with a little thought, any restaurant can improve its image, bottom line, and the world," said Rosalie Rung and Ian Wile, owners of Little Creek Oysters. "Small changes go a long way, and PSI's Guide is good place to start."

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2 funded the project, and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) oversaw it. Plastic pollution persists for hundreds of years in the environment, accumulates in ocean gyres, injures wildlife, blemishes beaches, and threatens human health.

"It is absolutely critical to prevent plastic ~~before~~ it litters our land and waterways," said Drew Youngs, Environmental Analyst at NEIWPCC. "The more restaurants embrace safer alternatives, the further the movement to rid our waterways of plastic will advance."

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