

# Recycling Disposable Paper Cups





**Our love for the bean is evident around the world.**

An estimated 3.5 billion cups of coffee are consumed worldwide every day. While the production of coffee in 2018/19 in just Mexico is projected to increase by 2.2 million sacks up to 4.5 million sacks, since 2016.

With an estimated 58 billion disposable coffee cups used worldwide each year, the demand is not going away anytime soon.

**So, what can we as consumers do to help the situation?**

**And how are coffee chains and businesses supporting the drive to reduce disposable cup waste and increase cup recycling?**

**There are actions you can take today...**

# Choose Your Vessel

**The choices we all make are undoubtedly critical to reducing the sheer volume of disposable cups we send to landfill.**

## Takeaway Drinks Vendors

The sourcing of recyclable or compostable takeaway cups is a top priority for many vendors and retailers now.

Polystyrene plastic and foam cups are being replaced with recyclable PP and PET or compostable PLA plastic cups for cold drinks.

While for hot drinks, the favoured replacements are paper hot cups with a PE lining which can be recycled or with a PLA lining which can be commercially composted.

Retailers are improving their green credentials further by offering reusable cups.

### Then what?

[Refer to Part 3 for our Practical Guide to Cup Recycling.](#)

## Consumers

If you're not sitting in with your drink, look out for takeaway vendors who are working hard to consider the environment.

Ask questions about the cup you are about to receive. Can it be re-used, recycled or composted? What do they need you to do to help?

#MySocialSpirit





# Cup Recycling in Action



**From cup manufacturers through to reprocessing plants, new innovations and initiatives are**

**emerging at every stage to reduce the number of disposable cups going to landfill.**

## **Manufacturers**

### **Re-design of disposable cups to improve ease of recycling**

Packaging companies such as Frugalpak are leading the charge in the manufacture of recyclable paper cups, specifically designing cups made from recycled cardboard and featuring an easy to separate liner.

It is suggested that with separate cup disposal and collection methods available, these cups could also be recycled in general paper mills as well as the existing specialist recycling plants.

### **Increase use of 100% recyclable or compostable materials**

Alternatively, food service packaging manufacturers Vegware are producing cups made entirely from plant-based materials which can biodegrade in under 12 weeks in commercial composting facilities.

## **Cup Recycling Bins and Cup Collection Containers**

Working in partnership with supply chain and waste collection companies, UK bin manufacturers such as Glasdon now offer purposely designed cup bins with individual compartments for liquid waste, plastic lids and collection tubes to collect the disposable cups separately.





## Supply Chain and Consumer Initiatives

### Sourcing Cup Stocks

Many coffee chains and smaller independents are sourcing their cups more responsibly, which in turn reduces the volume of virgin resources required to produce the cups. Starbucks and McDonald's are investing in the development of a sustainable cup made from materials that are recyclable, compostable or both. While Starbucks currently only offer single-walled cups with a 100% recycled and recyclable cup sleeve.

### In-store Return and Cup Recycling Schemes

Coffee chains including Costa and Tim Hortons have worked with waste management companies to launch cup recycling schemes in their stores.

Even with an evolving infrastructure, in-store return and recycle schemes are a simple solution with the miniscule inconvenience of holding on to your cup for a little longer.

### Latte Levy

In the same way charges for plastic carrier bags have been introduced in some countries to make us stop, think and re-use – proposed extra charge for paper cups are also being considered to be the catalyst that will also nudge to-go consumer behaviour.

### Reusable Rewards Schemes

The big coffee chains also offer discounts and other reward cards with stamps when you use a reusable cup.

### Workplace Drives

More and more organisations are introducing cup recycling bins and collection stations in the workplace, which makes total sense when you think about how many of us pick up a coffee on the way to work.

*Does your workplace offer this facility now? We look at workplace cup recycling initiatives and how to introduce one in Part 3.*



## Collection Services

### Improvements to the Binfrastucture

More waste management companies are now offering dedicated cup collection services for local authorities and businesses.

## Reprocessing Plants



### Fibre Recovery and Polymerisation

During the process of fibre recovery, the paper and the polymer lining are separated, the cups are pulped and the floating polyethylene is skimmed off and separated from the denser paper fibre.

Through the process of polymerisation, new polymers derived from used paper cups are also being developed which can then be used in the manufacture of other products.

**[Turn to Part 3 for a practical guide to introducing cup recycling programmes.](#)**