

Reusable Cups and Containers: Food Safety Tips

The use of reusable cups and containers supplied by customers for the purchase of food and drinks is becoming more popular as the community becomes more environmentally conscious of the environmental impacts of single use packaging.

As a business selling food and beverages there is a push to keep up and accept these cup/containers from customers. Food businesses should feel comfortable to accept cup/containers from customers for supplying takeaway food and beverages which will help reduce the amount of single use packaging they have to supply.

As a food business registered under the *Food Act 2003* it is a responsibility to operate in accordance with the *Food Safety Standards* to make sure they are supplying safe food to their customers.

The *Food Safety Standards* state:

“A food business must ensure the following equipment is in a clean and sanitary condition Eating and drinking utensils – immediately before use.”

[Standard 3.2.2 20(1)(a)]

This is not a new requirement or a specific City of Hobart ‘policy’ but has been included in the national *Food Safety Standards* since it came into law in 2001.

In practical terms for a business this means that eating and drinking utensils such as cups, plates and containers must be in a clean and sanitary condition prior to being used. This does not mean that the business must clean and sanitise each item immediately before use. It does mean that these items must be cleaned and sanitised between uses. If a used utensil has been supplied to a business the business cannot use it again until it has been cleaned and sanitised, even if the utensil is going back to the same person.

What to do when a reusable cup or container is provided by a customer

1. If reusable cup/containers is supplied to your business check it is clean. If clean, please use it.
2. If the cup/container appears to be visibly dirty the cup/container needs to be cleaned and sanitised before you can place any food or beverages into it.
3. To make sure the cup/container is clean and sanitary the container should be washed **and** either put through a dishwasher/glasswasher or manually sanitised using heat treatment or a leave on food grade sanitiser.
4. If your business is unable to provide cleaning and sanitising, it is considered reasonable to refuse the customer’s cup/container.

By allowing dirty cups and containers into your business you are not just adding a risk to the person eating from the cup/container, but also any additional customers who visit your business. Cross-contamination from these dirty products in your business is a food safety risk and has the potential to lead to the spread of harmful germs.

If you have any questions please contact an Environmental Health Officer on 6238 2715.