



Compostable Trays and Utensils

Compostable trays and utensils are an environmentally friendly alternative since they can be disposed of in the compost bin rather than ending up in a landfill.



Compostable Trays are being used by several schools which do not have dishwashing facilities. They are more expensive than Styrofoam, but unlike Styrofoam, they can be composted.

What schools are doing

West St. Paul Schools

It all started when Garlough Environmental Magnet School with a grant from Jeffers Foundation began using compostable trays, utensils, compostable bags, and a compost bin.

The program sparked a domino effect so that now every school in the district has some type of a composting program. None of these school kitchens have ever had dishwashing facilities. The schools have joined a co-op for bulk purchasing of compostables. The Food Service, Child Nutrition and District Sustainability Manager have worked collaboratively to reduce the amount of waste in the lunchrooms as well as moving towards use of more compostable items.



Blake Elementary School - Wayzata

At Blake Elementary School the biggest reduction in landfill trash in their lunchrooms results from the food service's commitment to purchasing environmentally preferable products. What was once a plastic cup is now a compost-

able one; any plasticware is now compostable. The food service has gone completely compostable in all ware purchases and changed from individual items to bulk. This has virtually eliminated landfill trash from the lunchroom.

Akin Road and Farmington Elementary Schools - Farmington

Both Akin Road and Farmington Elementary Schools use a commercial food service. They have been very supportive of the schools' programs and have begun purchasing compostable products including serving ware (forks, spoons), salad containers, and soup bowls. Paper soufflé cups have replaced plastic versions and waxed paper now covers the sandwiches instead of individual baggies.

Champlin-Brooklyn Park Academy - Champlin

Champlin Brooklyn Park Academy has purchased compostable trays and clamshells, in addition to an extra set of silverware, so that if they have an event where they cannot wash the trays, then they have a back-up plan that is not the typical Styrofoam.

Resources

Tim Farnan, Source Reduction Specialist with the MPCA has indicated that;

"While a reusable tray, plate or utensil is always the best option from an environmental perspective, compostable items can be advantageous when it's just not feasible to use a reusable. However, the compostable item has its greatest value when it can be composted. If a school is not composting there is less evidence that the package itself is environmentally superior to other items that also are going into the trash. Thus, the MPCA is hesitant to advocate for schools to switch to compostable trays, plates or utensils unless they are also implementing a composting program."

Cooperative Purchasing Venture

Schools (and any public entity) also have access to the state contracts to purchase compostable items, typically at a lower cost than if they buy them on their own. Info about that can be found at:

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/aj0rb74>

Advantages of Compostable Lunch Trays

http://www.brighthub.com/environment/green-living/articles/87012.aspx?cid=parsely_rec

Search Greenlivingtips.com for School Lunch Tray Dilemma

<http://www.greenlivingtips.com/articles/School-lunch-tray-dilemma.html>

Biodegradable Products institute

<http://www.bpiworld.org/>