



## **Single-Use Foodware Ordinance FAQ**

The City of Los Altos is committed to reducing plastic pollution and promoting a more sustainable future. As part of this effort, we're proposing an ordinance to regulate single-use plastic foodware at food facilities for both dine-in and take-out. This FAQ aims to answer some common questions about the ordinance.

### **Why is the City drafting a single-use foodware ordinance?**

There has been increasing concern in the community over the impact of disposable foodware, especially items made from plastic. Disposable foodware, including containers, cups, lids, utensils and straws, is a major contributor to street litter, ocean pollution, marine and other wildlife endangerment, and climate change. Many plastic disposable foodware items are used for just a few minutes before becoming waste, which lasts for hundreds or even thousands of years.

### **What types of foodware are affected by the ordinance?**

Single-use foodware that is designed to be discarded after a single or limited number of uses. These are commonly used to serve/distribute prepared food, including, but not limited to, cups, plates, to-go containers, cutlery (forks, knives, spoons, straws), and stir sticks.

### **Who will need to comply?**

Food facilities in Los Altos -- Any vendor, business, organization, entity, group, or individual, including a licensed retail food establishment that provides prepared food for public consumption. This includes restaurants, caterers, cafeterias, coffee shops, grocery stores, delicatessens, mobile or temporary food providers, or vehicles or carts.

### **How is dine-in defined for the purposes of the ordinance?**

Dine-in is when patrons consume prepared meals and beverages on-site. Patrons are typically seated at tables or counters provided by the establishment, and the food and beverages are intended for immediate consumption.

### **Where can I buy acceptable items?**

The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) has a list of all BPI-approved companies and their products. You can find this list here: <https://www.bpiworld.org/CertifiedCompostable>

Additionally, ask your distributor, vendor, restaurant supply shop, or on-line store what BPI fiber-based compostable foodware products (or aluminum alternatives) are available.



Visit [losaltosca.gov/foodware](https://losaltosca.gov/foodware) for a disposable and reusable foodware purchasing guide managed by the County of San Mateo. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list, and new compostable products are emerging in the marketplace at a rapid pace.

### **Why aren't PLA or other biodegradable plastics allowed under the Single-use Plastics Foodware Ordinance?**

While PLA and other biodegradable plastics may break down under certain conditions. If not disposed of properly, they can still contribute to pollution and may not degrade as expected in natural environments. Therefore, to prioritize truly sustainable options, our focus is on fiber-based packaging materials.

### **How can food facilities ensure compliance with the Single-use Foodware Ordinance?**

Restaurants can ensure compliance by educating staff about the transition to sustainable alternatives, updating their new inventory of packaging materials, and clearly communicating the changes to customers.

### **Does AB 1276 (Upon Request) still apply?**

Yes, staff should continue to provide single-Use Foodware Accessories by request only.

### **What is the timeline of this Ordinance?**

The City will host two informational sessions in June to inform the community on the proposed ordinance requirements and solicit feedback. Please check the website [losaltosca.gov/foodware](https://losaltosca.gov/foodware) for details.

The final ordinance will be brought to the City Council for a first and second reading. If adopted, businesses will have 6 months to comply (from adoption) with the requirements of the ordinance. This is to provide food facilities time to use up their existing non-conforming inventory of disposable foodware and to provide time to develop an education and enforcement program.