

THE FULL PACKAGE



Today, it's not enough that packaging is fit for purpose – it needs to be sustainable too...

Packaging and disposables are essential items for today's foodservice industry. In fact, according to IGD Research Analysis, the food-to-go market is thriving with a growth trajectory of over £22bn by 2023. As quality and sustainable takeaway options are in high demand, operators are investing in different varieties of packaging and disposables that are kinder to the environment.

Today's consumers expect an outlet's takeaway offering to be just as good as its in-house menu, which means no soggy bottoms and cups that customers can't hold without the risk of burning their fingers – all of which should be recyclable, compostable or biodegradable. Suppliers have taken note of this shift in demand and have been working hard to come up with products that are not only fit for their intended purposes, but that are environmentally friendly too.

Brakes, for example, is a part of initiatives such as the customer packaging forum and its collaborative approach to supply chain management is helping it to deliver its packaging commitments.

"Foodservice, like retail, has a leading role to play in being responsible users of plastics," says Hugo Mahoney, Brakes CEO. "We may be a less visible industry but we service customers across many sectors, including restaurants, schools, and hospitals, and we know consumers are asking our customers what they are doing about plastics. We are helping those customers by giving them the solution they need, such as committing to remove non-recyclable hard black plastic from our own brand products by the end of 2020."

COLLABORATIONS

When purchasing sustainable packaging and disposables, there are several factors that operators need to consider to increase recycling rates and reduce packaging waste. The first part of call should be the current waste contractor to discuss what options are available to the business, both front and back of house. Finding out the most cost-effective way to segregate and manage general waste and recyclable materials is integral to the

success of an initiative. "The use of clear signage around designated waste bins is vital and will make a real difference to a recycling scheme's uptake," explains Becci Eplett, marketing manager at Huhtamaki UK. "Not only will an effective recycling scheme divert waste from landfill or incineration, significantly reducing general waste disposal costs, it will additionally highlight a business's green credentials."

To ensure that a business can maximise its recycling potential, it's important that operators choose the most appropriate packaging. Don't be afraid to ask questions of suppliers, they should be able to offer in-depth advice on a range of products as well as possible disposal methods. Disposal should not be the only consideration for B&I sites when purchasing packaging and disposables; whether products are made from renewable resources should also be a part of the decision process.

Unsurprisingly, the most purchased takeaway products bought at breakfast time are hot drinks with 49% of shoppers buying them, according to the MCA

“
Work
alongside
an expert
to create
a bespoke
range of
disposables
”



Food to go market report 2018. As consumers are increasingly time-poor there has been a significant increase in hot food purchases at breakfast time. MCA's report found that 20% of consumers were buying something hot at breakfast time. "Since 2015, the demand for compostable packaging products suitable for use with hot grab and go foods – takeaway clamshells, noodle boxes, chip cones, trays and burger boxes – has more than tripled," reveals Jess Lyons, marketing co-ordinator for Planglow. "In 2018, these accounted for 19% of our overall packaging sales."

It's not just hot food that's increased in demand, sandwiches and wraps remain top sellers too, which means packaging such as wedges bloomer boxes, windowed bags and deli papers remain popular products. According to Planglow, 55% of its total packaging sales were products for sandwiches.

MULTI-FACETED

Aside from holding food or drink, disposable packaging offers foodservice outlets

a range of benefits. Not only do single-use products allow caterers to save costs with quick customer turnaround, but they remove the need to wash and dry crockery too, freeing up time for staff to spend on other tasks. "Disposable packaging means that catering points can be provided, even in the smallest of areas where there is no room for seating and so giving another revenue stream for caterers," points out Tom Workman, commercial trader for Creed Foodservice.

Takeaway packaging can also be a great marketing tool for outlets, as they can be branded with a company's logo or ethos, or any other kind of message. Modern technology allows anything from augmented reality to help convey the brand message to QR codes and nutritional information. "Take the time to work alongside an expert to create a bespoke range of disposables," says John Young, sales and marketing director for KeCo Foodservice Packaging. "Feature your brand logo, slogan, colours or promotional message to really add a point of difference and make your outlet and its

“
The use
of clear
signage
around
designated
waste
bins is vital
”

offerings stand out from the crowd."

Today's consumers are more environmentally aware than ever before, and as such they are more interested in how food packaging is made, its disposal and its environmental impact. This has driven the development of sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic and polystyrene packaging.

Sourcing environmentally friendly disposable packaging can be a minefield, as there are so many different varieties on the market. From compostable and recyclable to biodegradable, it can be tricky to know which one is the best option for your business. Packaging can be separated into two types: products that can be recycled for future use, such as those made from rPET or board, and those that will decompose.

"Bagasse is a popular material," says Rob Blunderfeld, marketing manager for Parsley in Time. "It is suitable for wet or dry food and delivers a sturdier option than paper."

As bagasse is plant-based, it can easily be composted. However, it's im-



HUHTAMAKI



TRI-STAR



TRI-STAR

“
 Foodservice,
 like retail,
 has a
 leading
 role to play
 in being a
 responsible
 users of
 plastics
 ”



WK THOMAS

TOP TIPS

How to get the most from packaging and disposables...

- **Best for budget** – “It’s vital that any food packaging looks the part, after all, consumers buy with their eyes,” says Young. “So, whether it’s branded or un-branded, modern, contemporary disposables with muted, more natural and subtle colour schemes are often preferable.”
- **Expert advice** – “Involve a packaging specialist with a wide range of food packaging solutions,” says a spokesperson for Colpac. “One that can meet your needs and assist you in maximising sales by creating interesting and engaging displays for your customers, while understanding your processes to help reduce food waste and recycle correctly.”
- **Choose local** – “When looking to purchase takeaway packaging, choose a company that manufactures in the UK,” suggests Eplett. “Local manufacturing is good for the environment and supports the British economy.”
- **Think green** – “Seek out home compostable products wherever possible,” advises Jess Lyons, PR and marketing co-ordinator for Plantow.
- **Whole package** – “Choosing the right on-trend, brandable packaging is a guaranteed way to increase sales and command a higher price point, increasing margins,” says Kevin Carran, managing director of Tri-Star Packaging. “It’s essential to follow the ‘three Ps of packaging’: right product, right packaging, equals the right profit.”

portant: that operators ensure there is a disposal system in place to avoid them ending up in landfill where it is unlikely to have access to the microorganisms necessary for decomposition, taking much longer to break down.

“For caterers, the holy grail is packaging that can be disposed of with the food, which is super-efficient and time-saving because there are no separate waste streams involved,” says Des Thurgood, sales director for WK Thomas. “This is where bagasse and corn starch come into their own, so expect more of these products in future.”

Products made from wood and bamboo, such as cutlery, dishes and bowls, are also increasing in popularity. With minimal impact on the environment these products are 100% compostable.

DISPOSAL

It’s all very well investing in sustainable packaging, but if there aren’t correct procedures and disposal methods in place then it renders the initiative pointless. Historically foodservice outlets’ good intentions to be more environmentally aware haven’t been supported by local disposal schemes, making it difficult to dispose of packaging in the correct way. However, there have been significant advances of late with more opportunities for caterers to implement a more sustainable approach to business.

The Paper Cup Recovery and Recycling Group (PCRRG) reported paper

cup recycling rates have increased from an estimated 1:400 to 1:25 in two years and estimate this to increase to 1:12 in 2019. According to the report, there are now more than 4,500 paper cup recycling points in the UK for consumers to return cups via bring banks and in-store take back schemes. Additionally, 115 local authorities currently collect paper cups with paper cartons.

Now 21 waste collectors actively participate in national recycling schemes compared to just two in 2017. Five reprocessors are now accepting paper cups, including ACE UK, DS Smith, James Cropper and Veolia. “The industry can be justly proud of the progress it has made so far, but we know that there is more work to do,” says Neil Whittall, chairman of the PCRRG. “Consumers are rightly demanding change and government is keen to make that happen.”

Packaging and disposables play an integral role for any foodservice outlet and, as such, the procurement process should involve just as much research and scrutiny as any other business purchase. From disposal and branding to suitability and cost, operators need to make an informed decision. By meeting consumer demand for more sustainable single-use packaging and disposable options that are fit for purpose, outlets can take full advantage of all the benefits it offers, such as reinforcing its eco credentials, boosting the brand’s profile and saving money.



CREED