

Compostable packaging for events *guidelines*

Commitment to Sustainability

This Compostable Packaging for Events Guidelines have been developed to assist event organisers in running their events more sustainably. Monash is currently developing a plan to increase food waste collections across our Victorian campuses. The food waste bins will be introduced to divert waste to landfill from on campus food retailers and selected students/staff kitchens.

Monash event organisers should replace single use containers with reusable serveware wherever possible however, we realise that for large scale events this is not always possible. So, to reduce the environmental impact of our campus events, we will include a collection service to collect food scraps and compostable packaging.



Why use compostable disposables?

We can simplify waste collection – compostable serveware can be disposed of together with food waste, no sorting needed. This eliminates contamination for recyclables waste streams – the sad truth about regular paper or cardboard for food serveware is that once you put food on a plate it becomes dirty and cannot be placed in mixed recycling bins. When food serveware is compostable and disposed together with food waste it can be processed and turned into compost.

Compostable serveware and products have the potential to reduce a proportion of the packaging waste which is currently not recovered or recycled at Monash and is sent to landfill.

Why only BioPak commercially compostable products?

Not all “Compostable” packaging are the same.

There are different types of compostable products and they require different composting processes. Some are suitable for home composting and worm farms, while others require a special set of conditions available only at industrial composting facilities. Compostable servingware is also difficult to identify which increases the likelihood of contamination.

The Biopak commercially compostable range is the only compostable packaging brand currently accepted by the offsite industrial composting facility that processes our food waste. Made from a mix of paper, cardboard, bamboo, sugar cane, PLA and corn starch. Some items like PLA and corn starch look and feel similar to plastic but are actually made from plant-based material unlike traditional plastic, which is made of oil and is not compostable or biodegradable. The product range has been tested at the facility and certified to biodegrade within 120 days.



What is commercial composting?

A commercial or industrial compost facility optimises the process of rapid biodegradation of organic material to high quality, toxic-free compost by controlling conditions like shredding material to the same size or controlling the temperature and oxygen levels resulting in nutrient-rich soil. In comparison to modern landfills that are designed to entomb municipal garbage, the result is very little biodegradation.

What is bioplastic and can it be composted?

A bioplastic is a substance made from organic biomass sources (eg. vegetable oils, cellulose, and starches) unlike conventional plastics, which are made from petroleum. Almost all bioplastics produce less CO₂ and their overall environmental impact is typically lower than that of conventional plastics.

The Biopak bioplastic range can be commercially composted and is the only brand accepted by our waste contractor. They are unlikely to compost in home composts as they need the controlled conditions (humidity, aeration, temperature) of aerobic composting for quick and safe compost production.

Can bioplastics be placed in mixed recycling bins?

No, bioplastic products are designed to return to the soil through composting. If thrown into the mixed recycling bin they will contaminate the load and end up in a landfill. Bioplastic does not biodegrade in landfill conditions.

What will happen if I put the wrong things in my food waste bin?

The wrong materials in your food waste bin could contaminate a whole truckload of organics. To comply with our waste contractors requirements contaminated bins will be sent to landfill and you could be charged a contaminated bin fee.

Further information:

Check our food and events page for more tips
<https://www.monash.edu/campus-sustainability/get-involved/food-and-events>

What goes in the food waste bin?

You can place any type of food scrap, leftover, spoiled or out of date food into your food waste bin as well as certified commercially compostable Biopak brand packaging. This includes:

- Biopak certified compostable products
- Fruit and vegetable peels and scraps
- Meat and seafood scraps and bones
- Egg shells
- Dairy products (cheese, yoghurt etc.)
- Bread, pasta, rice, cereal and dough
- Coffee grounds and tea leaves (NOT tea bags)
- Out of date food (processed or fresh)
- Confectionery

Prior to your event

If you intend to use compostable packaging at your event, you must contact the Sustainability Coordinators prior to purchasing serveware to ensure your packaging and event set up meets the requirements.

Let's work together to make your event as sustainable as possible.

Sustainability Coordinators
Buildings and Property

Tel: 9905 1703 or 9902 0427

Email: environment@monash.edu

Waste and recycling management

Contact Buildings and Property at buildings.property@monash.edu or **9902 0222** with the following details:

- The type, location and duration of your event
- The number of people expected
- If you require a food waste bin

Buildings and Property will assist you by:

- Providing bins for general waste, comingled recyclables and food/compostable waste (where possible)
- Providing bins for 'back of house' (e.g. stallholders) as well as attendees
- Ensuring that recycling bins are positioned appropriately and with adequate signage