

Meal Kits and Grocery Food Delivery

Best Practices for Reducing Packaging Waste



Packaging used for meal kits and grocery delivery services plays a critical role in food safety and preserving freshness. Considering your packaging choices can greatly reduce waste and product loss, boost your brand's sustainability profile, and even cut costs.

→ Reduce product packaging

- Offer an opt-out option for typically stocked items such as spices, oils and condiments. (A)
- Leave hardy ingredients, such as onions and peppers, loose. (B)
- Consider delivery times, such as night time or early morning, that reduce the need for insulated packaging and gel packs.

→ Use reusables

- **Transport packaging:** Insulated coolers or bags used to transport and deliver prepared food can be picked up and reused each time a new delivery is made. Insulated, reusable shipping containers may eliminate the need for cold packs and help food stay fresher longer.
- **Cold packs:** Ensure cold packs and other packaging materials are reused or recycled properly by offering take-back programs for customers. (C)



Okay

→ Choose packaging that is readily recyclable in curbside programs

- Use cardboard boxes and paper based insulation that are made with recycled content for transport packaging.
- Metal cans, paper, glass bottles/jars, and plastic bottles/jars are typically easier to recycle in curbside programs. NOTE: Plastic film wrap is NOT recyclable in most residential curbside recycling collection programs. (D)

→ Choose non-toxic cold packs

- Choose dry ice or frozen recyclable water bottles instead of gel cold packs that end up in the landfill and/or clog drains. (E)

Avoid

→ Avoid hard-to-recycle insulation

- Expanded polystyrene (“Styrofoam”) or other plastic insulation is rarely recyclable, even if it is labeled with a recycling symbol.

→ Avoid hard-to-recycle containers

- Very small containers and packaging made from multiple materials will not be captured and recycled by most curbside recycling programs due to the size and/or cost to separate materials. (F)

Reusable is best!

Instead of disposable boxes, insulation and cold packs, Terra’s Kitchen uses a reusable cooler. The returned containers are sanitized and re-shipped hundreds of times. Created and managed by FreshRealm, the “Vessel” or “FreshPorter” is an example of reusable transport packaging.



Other Options:

Vericool® provides coolers that are compostable and recyclable and are not made from Expanded Polystyrene (“Styrofoam”).



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Best Practices for Reducing Packaging Waste (continued)

Consumer Messaging

→ Provide accurate recycling information on your website and printed materials.

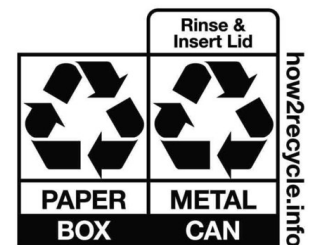
- Instruct customers to seek guidance from their city or waste collection provider as to what is recyclable and compostable locally, or use Earth911.com.
- Direct customers to take clean, dry plastic film without labels to recycle at participating grocery stores, or place in their garbage/landfill cart. More information at <http://www.how2recycle.info/sdo>.

→ Advise customers to reuse or place gel cold packs in the landfill.

- Offer take-back programs for gel packs. You may also suggest reuse opportunities such as for camping and picnics, or that customers give them away via online marketplaces like Craigslist or Freecycle.
- Gel from most cold packs can clog drains and often contain chemicals like sodium polyacrylate that should not go down the drain into our water treatment system.

→ Participate in How2Recycle.

- How2Recycle is a popular standardized labeling system that provides consistent and transparent on-package and online recycling information to customers. They also provide technical assistance for packaging decisions.



Financial Assistance & Resources

- StopWaste provides grants and technical assistance for businesses based in or serving Alameda County residents. Visit www.StopWaste.org/Grants for more details.
- Visit the Guide to Environmental Claims on Packaging for information on labeling and certification choices related to packaging recyclability at <http://Guides.StopWaste.org/packaging>.

For questions or comments, please email info@stopwaste.org.

