

An Update on Sausalito's Single-Use Plastic Foodware Ban



Image by Freddy Coronado, [Zero Waste Youth USA](#) - Bay Area Beach Clean-Up.

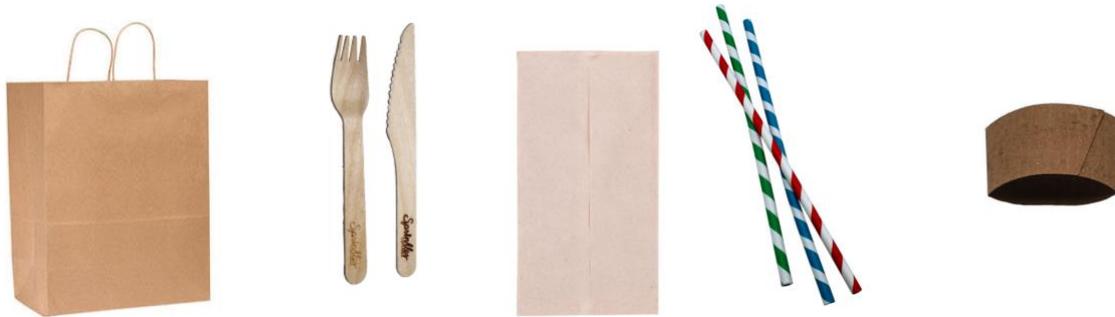
Upon Request Only: Reducing Waste & Preventing Litter, One Item at a Time

By Freddy Coronado, Zero Waste Consultant to the Sausalito Sustainability Commission

Straws, napkins, and plastic cups and cutlery continue to be littered in Sausalito and throughout the Bay Area. As the pandemic is fought on all fronts, our environment continues to suffer the consequences of plastic pollution and litter. The use of disposable items has greatly increased in the past year, and while some disposables like masks and disinfectant wipes have been necessary, others like plastic cutlery for takeout orders could be avoided.

As Sausalito reopens, our restaurants and cafes will now undertake a major sustainability effort led by the City of Sausalito. Beginning this Spring, Sausalito residents will start seeing less disposable paper straws, napkins, coffee sleeves, and cutlery in their takeout and delivery food orders. In 2019, the City of Sausalito approved the [Single-Use Plastic Ban Ordinance](#) in a major effort to curtail plastic pollution, litter, and reduce the amount of waste going into our landfills. The ordinance gained support from our local environmental and community groups including the Sausalito Women's Club, Sausalito Beautiful, and Resilient Neighborhoods among many others. Its implementation, however, was halted in order to focus our collective energy on saving our businesses and lowering the contagion.

As we emerge from the pandemic, Sausalito must and can reopen in a more sustainable way. The first phase of the City of Sausalito's Single-Use Plastic Ban Ordinance **requires food vendors to provide single-use food accessories only upon customer request**. Residents and visitors alike **must now ask for straws, stirrers, condiment packets, napkins, coffee sleeves, and other food accessories if they want one**. With the exception of condiment packets, the mentioned food accessories must be fiber-based. This mandate applies to takeout and delivery orders as well. Reducing the distribution of these disposables will also save our businesses money; the less they have to spend purchasing disposables the more they will save.



Images by Mark Nichols from the San Francisco Department of the Environment

Single-Use Food Accessories and takeout bags will now be provided only upon customer request. These single-use items must also be fiber-based. Petroleum-based and compostable plastic foodware items are banned and will eventually be phased out.

The uphill battle will be eliminating single-use plastics from takeout and delivery orders and switching to compliant fiber-based foodware. For now, the easiest approach is to reduce the amount of cutlery, straws, and napkins ending up in our waste stream, and ask customers to [#SkipTheStuff](#). Our residents can do their part by saying “no” to single-use items, especially when eating at home.

How community members can help:



- Refuse unnecessary single-use items when ordering food for delivery or takeout.
- Bring your own clean cup for to-go drinks from cafes and restaurants. Always ask if it's okay to do so. A restaurant or a coffee shop can deny your request due to health precautions.
- When dining-in, request reusable items like coffee cups, plates, and utensils. Enjoy your food and drinks in the outdoor seating available at many of our food establishments.
- Bring your own containers to cafes and restaurants for taking left-overs home.
- Encourage your favorite restaurants and cafes to only provide disposable items upon request.
- Dispose of your single-use items properly. Paper and fiber-based products, like paper straws, napkins, can be composted.
- Plastic cups and plastic cutlery including those that are “biodegradable” or labeled “compostable plastic”, go in the trash.

The city understands that Sausalito restaurants, cafes, delis, and coffee shops will need time to switch to reusables and/or compliant fiber based foodware. Food vendors are required to make the move away from single-use plastic as they have the capacity. **In addition, all food vendors can request assistance at no cost.**



Image by [Jasmin Sessler](#) from [Pixabay](#)

We are not alone in our quest to reduce single-use plastics.

The City of Sausalito is tackling the issue of single-use plastic head-on. Like other cities and towns in Marin County, including [Fairfax](#) and [San Anselmo](#), [Sausalito](#) has adopted its own ordinance banning the distribution of single-use plastics in retail food establishments, throughout city facilities, and at public events. In fact, [San Francisco](#), [Berkeley](#), [Alameda](#), and various other municipalities have enacted similar ordinances that require food vendors to distribute food accessory items upon request only. There is also a larger movement by the Plastic Pollution Coalition to stop the plastic pandemic and make foodware accessories upon request, asking Governor Gavin Newsom to take [action on the matter](#).

Phases of the Sausalito Single-Use Plastic Ban Ordinance:

- **Phase I - Upon Request Only Requirement (Spring 2021)** Food vendors are required to provide single-use food accessories only upon customer request. Customers must ask for paper straws, napkins, condiment packets, stirrers, and other drink or food accessories if they need one, this also applies for delivery and or take-out. In addition, any disposable food accessories must be fiber-based, and certified compostable, and free of harmful chemicals. Food vendors are highly encouraged to provide reusable foodware and cutlery for dine-in customers.
- **Phase II - Reusable Foodware and Fiber-Based Disposables Requirement (Fall 2021)** Food Vendors must provide reusable dishware and reusable cutlery for dine-in customers. Food vendors required to eliminate single-use petroleum-based plastic and compostable plastic foodware and switch to fiber-based disposables.
- **Phase III - Phase Out of Plastic Cups (Summer 2022?)** Food vendors must provide reusable cups for dine-in customers. Disposable cups must be paper based and free of plastic coating. Implementation will likely be enforced by the County of Marin.

If you have any questions about the Single-Use Plastic Ban, or to **request assistance**, please email the Sustainability Commission at sustaincomm@sausalito.gov.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SAUSALITO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAN

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