

CASE STUDY:

The Conservatory for Coffee, Tea & Cocoa

**ReThink
Disposable**
STOP WASTE BEFORE IT STARTS

BUSINESS PROFILE

Name: The Conservatory
Business Type: Café
Location: Culver City, CA
On-site dining: 35 seats
Take-out: Yes
Warewashing: 3-Sink system
Employees: 14

The Conservatory for Coffee, Tea & Cocoa is a café across the street from the famous Sony Studios that serves hot and cold coffees roasted in house, over 100 types of tea, bagels with cream cheese, and a selection of pastries. Most customers are locals who work or live in the area, and tourists. Typically, 75% of Conservatory Café customers order for take-out. Customers place and pick-up orders from the counter behind the register. A self-serve station is located next to the pick-up counter and offers plastic utensils, wooden stir sticks, individually wrapped sweeteners, assorted bulk sweeteners, and plastic straws. A water cooler is located next to the pick-up counter for customers and is also self-serve with disposable cups. Customers bus themselves, placing reusables in a bus tub next to where they throw the disposables away into the trash can.

Packaging Practices prior to ReThink Disposable:

- ➔ Hot drinks were served in a ceramic mug and pastries on a small plate for dine-in customers
- ➔ Conservatory branded reusable mugs were available for purchase adjacent to the service counter without advertised discount
- ➔ Wooden stir sticks, individual sugar and sweetener packets, some bulk spices and sugar (cinnamon, cocoa, white sugar, honey, agave), plastic utensils (forks, spoons, knives), and individually wrapped plastic straws were readily available at the self-serve station
- ➔ Napkins in a dispenser were also located at the self-serve station
- ➔ Plastic water cups were next to the water cooler near the pick-up counter for dine-in



Recommendations Implemented:

- ➔ Replaced plastic water cups with reusable cups for dine-in
- ➔ Replaced plastic utensils with reusable metal cutlery
- ➔ Replaced wooden stirrers with metal spoons
- ➔ Individually wrapped straws are available as a request only item for on-site drinks with signage next to the straws at the self-serve station
- ➔ Advertised reusable cup "BYOC" (Bring Your Own Cup) incentive for to-go orders
- ➔ Reinforced staff asking if orders are for here or to-go and prioritized the use of reusables for on-site dining

BEFORE: Disposable paper hot cup with plastic lid and wooden stirrer, plastic water cup, and bagel served with plastic knife.



AFTER: Reusable to-go coffee mug with metal spoon stirrer, reusable water cup, and bagel served with metal knife.

As a result of implementing **ReThink Disposable's** recommendations, The Conservatory reduced their use of targeted disposable foodware items by an average of **65%** and is **preventing the use of 205,008 disposable items and 2,118 pounds of waste annually, while earning an ongoing net cost savings each year of \$6,898.82** from the avoided foodware purchases. The owner purchased all the reusable foodware needed to implement the program for only \$112.

A few operational changes were implemented to support the use of these reusable items. The Conservatory added one small collection container for used stirrer spoons at the self-serve station. Staff time, and therefore labor cost, was not impacted by the new operation. The changes were seamlessly implemented, and the owner reported that the business has not had any issue with maintaining dishwashing needs. The owner has only experienced positive results from the program including an increase in the sale of their branded reusable mugs due to the new signage advertising the \$0.10 discount at the point of sale.

Results:

Disposable Product Replaced or Minimized	ReThink Disposable Recommendation Implemented	% Disposable Reduction	Payback Period (months)	Annual Packaging Reduction (# of pieces)	Annual Net Cost Savings* (after payback period)	Annual Waste Reduction (lbs.)
8 oz Plastic Cups	Implement reusable water cups	100%	1.4	10,139	\$227.40	61
Plastic Forks	Implement reusable silverware	100%	2.7	12,167	\$83.08	61
Plastic Knives	Implement reusable silverware	67%	4.1	8,111	\$52.05	41
Plastic Spoons	Implement reusable silverware	100%	5.4	12,167	\$83.08	61
Wooden Stirrers	Implement reusable stirrers	100%	0	15,208	\$60.83	28
Plastic Straws	Reduce individually wrapped plastic straw usage via signage	25%	0	8,517	\$56.07	14
8 oz, 12 oz, 16 oz, 20 oz Paper/Plastic Lined Hot Cups	Implement reusable mug discount with advertising	37%	0	57,357	\$2977.16	1,282
8 oz – 20 oz PLA Hot Lids	Implement reusable mug discount with advertising	30%	0	62,571	\$2752.52	375
Paper Sleeves	Reduce paper sleeves from reusable mug discount with advertising	30%	0	18,771	\$606.63	195
Individually Wrapped Sugar Packets	Implement bulk sweeteners	No available data at this time.				

*Net Cost Impact considers any upfront and ongoing costs associated with the purchase and care of reusable items and capital improvements needed to carry out ReThink Disposable's recommendations. Net cost savings are based on avoided disposable foodware purchases.

TOTAL	205,008	\$6898.82	2,118 lbs.
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THE BOTTOM LINE

- \$6,898.82 in annual net cost savings
- 205,008 disposable items reduced per year
- 2,118 pounds of annual waste reduction
- No impact to labor costs
- Positive feedback from Café patrons

AJ Barish, Owner: "I think everybody wants to do the right thing but some of us need more encouragement than others. It's nice to have someone to be accountable to. This program has kept us accountable, which is great. I have wanted to make these changes for a while now and some of the changes I haven't even thought of before, so I am glad to have signed up for this program."



ReThink Disposable is a program of Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund conducted in partnership with The Bay Foundation, local businesses, and government agencies. Generous support is provided by a changing list of public and private funders. To learn more about the program, its partners, and funders, visit: www.rethinkdisposable.org.



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