

Reusable To-Go Containers

This fall, UVA Dining is rolling out the most recent innovation in sustainable eating on Grounds: the reusable to-go container. For a one-time \$7 deposit, students will receive two key-cards that they use to check out reusable to-go containers (one card per container) from any of the three dining halls or dining locations that serve hot food. After use, the dishwasher-safe containers may be brought back to any of the participating dining locations for cleaning. When a student brings back a dirty to-go container, the cashier will return a key-card to him/her for use in checking out another to-go container in the future. This process may be repeated all year long, both developing into a habit for students and reducing the amount of waste that UVA is directly contributing to our already crowded landfills.

The to-go containers provided by UVA Dining have evolved over the years, as more information comes to light about the resources used to manufacture these products, as well as what happens at the end of their life cycles. Because of the increasingly sophisticated methods used to evaluate the containers' environmental friendliness, Dining has already phased out Styrofoam use and is now also looking beyond biodegradable to reusable containers.

Why not Styrofoam containers?

- Styrofoam containers are entirely synthetic in nature, and thus do not decompose in a landfill.
- Styrofoam material is created via a chemical process, and these chemicals may leach into the food they hold, or into the environment after they are thrown away. Either way, these chemicals may have toxic effects on their surroundings.

Why not biodegradable containers?

- It takes a commercial composting operation to properly breakdown these corn-based clamshells. If the containers are merely sent to a landfill, as is the case when they are thrown in a trash can around Grounds, they do not easily biodegrade.
- These biodegradable clamshells also release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere when they do begin to decompose, which undermines the degradable material's intent to be environmentally friendly.

Why reusable containers?

- Reusing to-go containers prevents our finite natural resources from ending up in landfills.
- Cleaning these containers for reuse does require water; however, reusing to-go containers will reduce the resource-intensive manufacturing process needed to create a brand new container for each one-time use.
- They will eventually break our habit of relying on single-use disposables.

Interested in signing up?

Registering to participate in the reusable container program can take place at any participating dining location. Simply inform the cashier of your interest, and make sure you provide your name and email

address on the sign-up sheet. Registration is complete after you pay the \$7 deposit with cash, check, or credit card. You will be contacted at the end of the year and provided with information on how to be refunded your \$7 deposit.

If you have any questions about the program, please contact Kendall Singleton, Dining Sustainability Coordinator: kendall.singleton@virginia.edu.

Participating Locations:

O-Hill

Runk

Newcomb

Crossroads

Fine Arts

West Range

Pav XI

Castle