OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide 3.0

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION

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Contents

Introduction

Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide 3.0 is designed to equip restaurants and hotels with the tools to choose the best "ocean-friendly" products for their businesses and avoid greenwashing. Since the Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide 2.0 was **launched in early 2024**, even more foodware products have entered the market. With that, the plastic industry is working overtime to water down existing plastic-reduction policies, push false solutions like advanced recycling, and ramp up the production of plastics and bioplastics. In response, Surfrider has advocated for policies at every level of government to incentivize **reusable packaging,** reduce **harmful chemical additives** (such as PFAS) in foodware, ensure **product labels** align with proper disposal methods, and strengthen existing **plastic bans**.

Thankfully, customers are driving demand for sustainable foodware, and there are more affordable options available on the market than ever before. **Reports show** that 78% of consumers rank sustainability among their top purchasing factors. Additionally, there is better awareness around the negative health impacts of plastic foodware and harmful chemical additives. At least **twenty states** have even enacted bans on intentionally added PFAS in foodware products, and restaurants around the country are switching to nontoxic reusables, especially for **on-site dining**.

Unfortunately, greenwashing remains widespread as brands take advantage of consumer values. These days, it is more common to see bioplastic straws (e.g., made from PLA) offered at restaurants instead of reusables like metal or glass, paper straws, or straws made from other naturally occurring materials. There are currently no regulations on bioplastics at the federal level, leading to voluntary participation in technical standards, inconsistency among marketing claims, and a lack of transparency in product ingredients. Since **bioplastic production** is expected to triple by 2028, it is important for businesses to be aware of these issues and know how to spot greenwashing. That's why Surfrider has updated our Foodware Guide to help businesses stay informed!

> ***"Choosing the 'right' product for your business is when you get to think like a materials engineer. What are some informed actions you can take? Ditch the single-use plastics altogether. Reducing your use of plastic is the best way to prevent plastic pollution. When a disposable product is needed, a good rule of thumb is that the more open a brand is about its product, the lower the estimated environmental impacts tend to be. It's even better to seek out resources from trusted organizations to make sense of marketing language and claims. Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide is a great example of such a resource."***
>
> – Dr. Bryan James, Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering at Northeastern University

Common Terms and Labels

Common Terms

There are many buzzwords and labels that you may see on products that aren't regulated. Words such as "renewable," "eco," "biodegradable," "plastic-free," "plant-based," or "green" can often be used with no scientific backing at all. Sometimes brands even create fake sustainability symbols or display certification labels on their products or websites without ever having their products tested, deceptively making it appear as though they have obtained official certifications. This can result in greenwashing, making it even more difficult to find and source the best product for your needs, and the environment.

Words such as "renewable," "eco," "biodegradable," "plastic-free," "plant-based," or "green" can often be used with no scientific backing at all.

Greenwashing: Greenwashing occurs when companies intentionally label and market products as environmentally friendly that do not actually provide an environmental benefit. Consumers may feel better about their choices, even though those items may have similar or even worse environmental impacts than their previous choice in product. What's worse, these products are often more expensive than the ones they intend to replace.

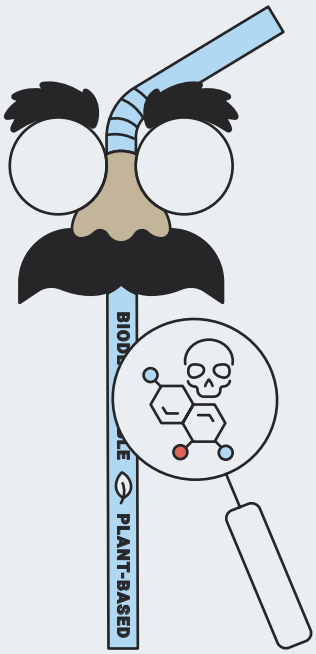
Federal Trade Commission's **"Green Guides"** provide **recommendations on how companies can avoid making deceptive environmental marketing claims.** However, the guides are not federal regulations, and they do not include enforcement provisions. The Green Guides were first written in 1992 and most recently revised in 2012. A process to update these guides started in 2022 and is currently ongoing, and they are needed to reflect new products and terms.

Bad Ingredients in Disguise

LOOK OUT FOR THESE GREENWASHING RED FLAGS

Buzzwords: Watch out for terms that are not backed up by certifications or data. A few phrases to look out for include "renewable," "biodegradable," "eco," "plastic-free," "plant-based," "green," and even "ocean-friendly."

Missing Certifications: A product that says "bio-based" without listing the USDA Biobased logo and the certified percentage of bio-based content, may not be truly bio-based after all.



Mimics Regular Plastic: Ask yourself, "does this look and feel like plastic?" If it does, then it could be a plastic or bioplastic, and more information is needed about the product ingredients.

Lack of Transparency: Take some time to explore the product's website. If ingredients or processes aren't clearly listed, the product may be greenwashing.

Material Types

Bioplastics: Bioplastic is an umbrella term for plastics completely or partially made from plants (bio-based plastic) and plastic that is marketed as biodegradable or compostable. These bioplastic products often look and feel like plastic and are typically made using the same processes and toxic additives as traditional plastic. They may or may not biodegrade or compost, depending on how a product is made. Bioplastic may also refer to a fossil fuel-based plastic that has been combined with additives to become biodegradable over various time frames.

Most bioplastics are not recyclable and are only compostable in industrial composting facilities, something that most communities don't have. Some industrial composters don't even accept bioplastics due to contamination concerns. Bioplastics are often **marketed as a sustainable** solution to conventional plastic, but some **can take hundreds of years to degrade** and can even be **more toxic than conventional plastic**!

For more details and to learn more about bioplastics, check out Surfrider's Bioplastics Facts and Resources Page.

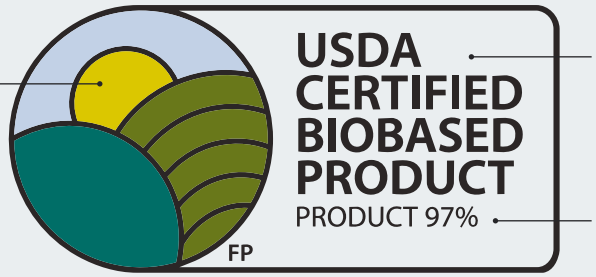
Bio-Based Plastics: As stated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "bio-based plastics are manufactured from plant materials instead of being made from oil or natural gas." The term bio-based describes where *some or all* of the material comes from, and because it sounds natural, it mistakenly implies that the end product is biodegradable. However, bio-based plastics can be designed to be structurally identical to petroleum-based plastics. If designed in this way, they can last in the environment for the same period of time as petroleum-based plastic, cause the same threats to wildlife, and result in the production of microplastics.

Bio-based plastics are usually branded with a leaf symbol and may state that they are made from corn, sugar cane, agave, or other natural-sounding sources. There is often no indicator to state what percentage of the plastic is made from plants. The USDA generally only requires a minimum of 25% bio-based content for most products seeking the USDA Biobased Certification. The rest of the polymer could be made from or blended with conventional fossil fuel-based plastic. The higher the percentage, the better. Ideally, products are 97-100% bio-based.

The USDA generally only requires a minimum of 25% bio-based content for most products seeking the USDA Biobased Certification. The rest of the polymer could be made from or blended with conventional fossil fuel-based plastic. The higher the percentage, the better. Ideally, products are 97-100% biobased.

USDA Certified Biobased Label

WHAT TO KNOW



Meant to represent the sun, soil, and aquatic environments.

Represents products that have qualified for the Federal preferred purchasing program.

The words "USDA Certified Biobased Product" are required by law to be used for all certified products.

Tells consumers the percent of certified biobased content. This should be displayed on the label.

Common Types of Bio-Based Plastic

PLA: Polylactic Acid (PLA) is a type of bio-based plastic typically made from lactic acid derived from sugarcane or corn that has been chemically polymerized. Despite claims of environmental friendliness, products made from PLA will only degrade at industrial composting facilities, which aren't readily available in most communities. Additionally, PLA products often contain high upstream impacts from growing the plant-based material and processing it into a plastic product. PLA plastic will not break down into natural elements in your backyard compost.

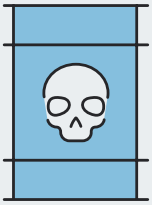
PHA & PHB: Polyhydroxyalkanoate (PHA) and Polyhydroxybutyrate (PHB) are an emerging class of bio-based plastic that is produced by microbial fermentation and then extracted. The fermentation process uses various carbon sources as feedstocks, such as vegetable oils, sugars, starches, or methane. PHA is a class of polymers of which PHB is a specific polymer in that class. PHA and PHB have a higher heat threshold, which can reduce the need for chemical processing or additives. It is important to note that not all PHA and PHB products on the market are made equal. Depending on the feedstock and additives, different PHA and PHB products have different time periods and requirements needed to degrade. Surfrider continues to monitor the latest research and assess PHA and PHB products on a case-by-case basis.

PLA vs. PHA: PLA is made through chemical processes, whereas PHA and PHB are made primarily through microbial fermentation. **PLA isn't always compostable**, but when it is, it requires an industrial compost facility to break down. Alternatively, some **PHA and PHB products may be certified home compostable**. PHA and PHB products on the market vary widely.

Bioplastics Aren't All Made Equal

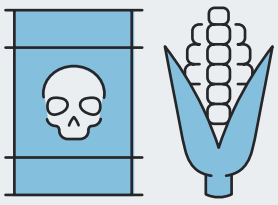
THE TERM DESCRIBES A BROAD CATEGORY OF MATERIALS

Fossil-Fuel Based
Petroleum-based plastic with degradation additives



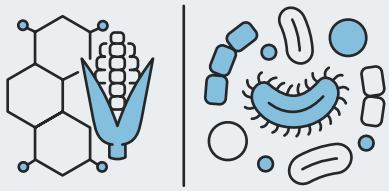
Non-compostable, non-recyclable, creates microplastics

Blend of Both
Bio-based material mixed with fossil-fuel-based plastic



Non-compostable, contaminates recycling streams, creates microplastics

Bio-Based
Chemically altered or bio-fermented plant materials



PLA: Chemically Altered Plant Sugars

PHA / PHB: Microbial Fermentation

Compostability varies*, may contaminate recycling streams, PLA creates microplastics

*PLA is only compostable at high heat industrial composting facilities (of which there are few in the US); PHA/PHB can break down naturally depending on how it's made.

Other Common Materials and Additives

Petroleum-Based Plastics: These are conventional fossil fuel-based plastics, which are usually cheap, plentiful, and highly resistant to biodegradation, regardless of environmental conditions. These materials have not been shown to biodegrade in our lifetime, even with controlled experiments using a wide range of microorganism strains. Since they are produced from fossil fuel, they are also a major contributor to climate change and should therefore be avoided when purchasing disposable products. To make matters worse, petroleum-based plastics contain more than 16,000 toxic chemicals.

PFAS : PFAS — which stands for poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances — are a group of man-made chemicals commonly found in food packaging and household products, such as nonstick pans and water-resistant fabrics. They are also added to plastics to change their chemical properties, sometimes to increase heat resistance or repel water, grease, or oil. According to the EPA, PFAS can accumulate in the body over time, which is why they are also referred to as "forever chemicals." They have been linked to adverse health outcomes, including cancer, compromised immune system function, and hormone disruption. See Surfrider's Beachapedia article for more information.

Many states have enacted bans on intentionally added PFAS in foodware products such as California, Connecticut, Hawai'i, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington.

Minimally-Altered Naturally Occurring Materials: Surfrider defines "minimally-altered naturally occurring materials" as products made with ingredients that are not artificial or fossil fuel-based, and have not undergone extensive processing and/or chemical modification from their natural state. Naturally occurring materials, such as paper, bamboo, wood, or hay, for example, do not require industrial composting facilities for disposal. Some certifications that Surfrider looks for include: USDA Certified 97-100% Biobased and TUV Home Compost Certified. No certification is perfect, however, so seek out products that provide a full list of ingredients before determining whether a product is made from minimally-altered naturally occurring materials.

End of Life

Biodegradable: The EPA defines biodegradable as "the ability of a substance to be broken down physically and/or chemically by microorganisms. For example, many chemicals — food scraps, cotton, wool, and paper — are biodegradable; plastics and polyester generally are not." "Biodegradable" is not an appropriate claim or marketing term for describing bioplastic or plastic products because it doesn't include the timeframe for degradation to occur. It also often doesn't consider whether chemicals would remain in the environment or be released during the degradation process.

Additionally, the definition doesn't outline the conditions required for degradation, such as specific heat, moisture, or oxygen levels. These specific conditions do not often occur at common disposal sites such as landfills, recycling facilities, or out in the environment. More often than not, "biodegradable" plastic items don't fully break down naturally, and instead just degrade into microplastic pollution.

Marine Degradable: Marine degradable generally means a material can completely break down under marine environmental conditions, including aerobic marine waters or anaerobic marine sediments within a specified time frame, leaving no toxic residue or microplastics. Current methods used by manufacturers to certify "marine degradability" do not always accurately reflect natural conditions, and many field experiments cannot demonstrate whether or not the product fully degrades or breaks down into microplastics. More research and testing are needed for this term to be reliable and meaningful.

Compostable: The simplified definition by Oxford Dictionaries states, "able to be made into compost," with compost defined as "decayed organic material used as a plant fertilizer." Similar to biodegradable products, most compostable products, especially bioplastics, require highly specific environmental conditions. This means that these items will not simply turn into compost when tossed in a landfill or backyard compost bin. An important distinction to note is whether an item is "home compostable" or only compostable in a specialized industrial composting facility. While the term "compostable" is more regulated by certification standards than the term "biodegradable," there are still factors to consider before purchasing compostable products, such as proper disposal methods.

KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY

States like California, Maryland, and Washington have passed **laws banning the term "biodegradable" on product labels. Be wary of companies that tout their products as biodegradable without any certifications**, a timeframe for degradation to occur, or proper instructions for disposal.

California recently **passed a law that requires** products labeled as **"compostable"** to be **third-party certified**, to not contain PFAS chemicals, and to be accepted by solid waste facilities.

Types of Composting

Industrial compostable: If a product is only compostable in an industrial composting facility, using high heat and specialized equipment, which is usually the case with bioplastic foodware, these facilities can be difficult to come by. More often than not, jurisdictions lack the distribution networks needed to get compostable waste from your trash bin to the correct facility. Further, some industrial composting facilities are beginning to reject bioplastics because they often don't break down completely, take a longer time to process, and contain chemicals that can contaminate the compost and reduce its value. Industrial compostable products are often labeled with certifications such as ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) D6400 and ASTM 6868, which is the standard used by BPI's (Biodegradable Products Institute) Compostable Certification, EN 13432, or TUV (Technical Inspection Association) Austria Compost Industrial.

While certifications are valuable for building trust and providing third-party verification, some brands list testing methods on their products instead of an actual certification. This is a way of greenwashing that the product was tested and then verified to have met a standard's performance requirements, when really all they did was run a test. Ex: ASTMD6400 = meaningful and shows it met specific performance requirements. ASTM D5338 = meaningless as it provides no information on how the product actually performed.

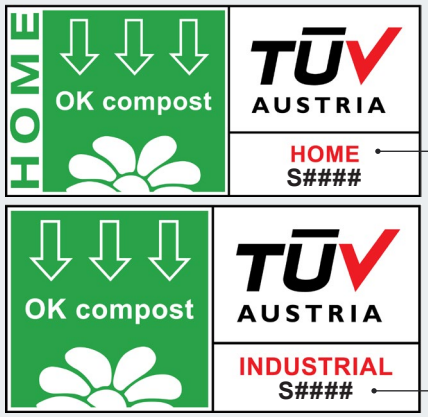
Home compostable: Home composting natural food waste, plant debris, and paper products with minimal ink or chemical processing has some fantastic benefits. Products labeled as "home compostable" (such as certified "TUV Home Compost") are more easily able to break down into their natural materials. Home compostable means that materials meet compostable specifications without the need for an industrial composting facility. Under TUV Austria's OK Compost HOME certification, the material must, through backyard compost methods such as worm bins or compost piles: (1) biodegrade by 90 percent or more within 365 days; (2) fully disintegrate in a way that makes the materials indistinguishable from the compost soil; and (3) not have measurable ecotoxicity.

BIODEGRADABLE VS. COMPOSTABLE

According to BPI, **all compostable items are biodegradable**, but **not all biodegradable items are compostable**. Compostable materials break down into nutrient-rich soil within a specific, stated timeframe in a composting environment. Biodegradable materials could break down naturally over an undefined, often much longer, period and may leave toxic residue, depending on how they are made.

Technical Inspection Association Label

WHAT TO KNOW



Specifies whether a product is certified home compostable (best option) or industrial compostable (suitable alternative only if an industrial composting facility is accessible).

Represents a unique S-code of the specific licensee who manufactures the certified material. You can use this number to look up the product in the TÜV Austria Online Portal and ensure the certification is valid.

Product Guide

Ocean Friendly Foodware

To help review products and avoid greenwashing, we've created an Ocean Friendly Product Buying Guide, a **"How Ocean Friendly Is This Product?" Quiz**, and a **Decision Matrix** to evaluate the products you're currently using and to help discover products you may not have considered in the past. We've categorized the following foodware options as either "best choice," "good alternative," "what to avoid," and "what is assessed on a case-by-case basis" based on overall environmental impacts and material composition. We hope this inspires you to find ways to reduce your use of single-use items and to make more sustainable choices for your business.

Disclaimer: The Surfrider Foundation prepared and freely provided the Foodware Guide 3.0 as an educational resource. Product inclusion in the guide does not imply endorsement or an official corporate partnership with the Surfrider Foundation. To the extent permissible by law, the Surfrider Foundation will not be liable for any expenses, losses, damages, (including indirect or consequential damages) or costs which might be incurred as a result of the information being inaccurate or incomplete in any way and for any reason. The guide is not a comprehensive list of every brand or product on the market, but is intended to serve as a starting point to help businesses find more sustainable products.

Product Categories

Best Choice

DURABLE, NON-TOXIC REUSABLES:
Metals, glass, ceramics.

The Surfrider Foundation advocates for reducing the overall use of single-use plastic items by switching to reusables whenever possible. That's why a mandatory criterion for the Ocean Friendly Restaurants Program is that onsite dining must be served on reusables. This includes cups, plates, sauce containers or ramekins, and anything else you use to serve your customers. Eating with reusables elevates the presentation of the food and the customer's dining experience, while also helping to avoid harmful chemicals and reduce waste.

While the upfront cost of reusables may be higher, it is important to consider how long you will use them and calculate the cost savings of switching away from single-use disposable items over time. You can check out Plastic Free America (formerly Plastic Free Restaurants) to get a subsidy for switching from disposables to reusables, or explore Rethink Disposable's tool to calculate cost savings at your restaurant. Don't have a dishwasher? Check out Upstream's Wash Hub and Reuse Service Provider map.

Our Ocean Friendly Restaurants have saved between $3,000 and $25,500 a year by switching from single-use plastic to reusable foodware for on-site dining. Explore the case studies at the end of this guide to learn more.

Our Ocean Friendly Restaurants have saved between $3,000 and $25,500 a year by switching from single-use plastic to reusable foodware for on-site dining.

Good Alternative

MINIMALLY-ALTERED NATURALLY OCCURRING MATERIALS:
Completely made of paper, bamboo, hay, seaweed, wood, or palm leaf without a plastic or PLA lining, or PFAS.

If you can't use reusables, the next recommended products are single-use items made from minimally-altered, naturally occurring materials, such as bamboo plates, wooden utensils, straws made of paper, hay, seaweed, and more!

Beware of plastic or PLA-lined paper items, as these are not recyclable or home compostable.

Some paper and fiber-based products have been found to **contain toxic PFAS**. Choose items that are PFAS-free. We only include products in the buying guide that have no intentionally added PFAS.

Brands may sell "good alternatives" as well as "items to avoid" products so be sure to **vet each individual product you buy.**

EDIBLE MATERIALS:
Oat-based, gelatin-based, cornstarch-based, rice-based, and pasta products that are food-safe and can be safely eaten or home compostable after use.

Since edible products are typically food-safe, they might not have the certifications we typically look for in foodware. In that case, it is best to review a list of product ingredients. Please note that not all edible foodware products are vegetarian.

RECYCLABLE ALUMINUM CUPS:
Aluminum cups are not always as durable as those in the "Best Choice" category, but they can be easily recycled and reused compared to other disposable cup options on the market.

What to Avoid

PETROLEUM-BASED PLASTICS:
Typical fossil fuel-based plastic products and plastics that claim to be entirely or partially made of recycled plastics. Recycled plastics are generally not infinitely recyclable, degrade in quality each time they are processed, and often contain and leach higher levels of dangerous chemicals.

CHEMICALLY-ALTERED BIOPLASTIC MATERIALS:
Bioplastics, such as PLA, that require specialized disposal facilities, and PHA with chemical additives. See the Key Terms section for more information.

BLENDS:
Bio-based materials blended with conventional petroleum-based plastic or bioplastic. Sometimes these products will indicate on their website whether they are blended with plastic or bioplastic.

Assessed Case-By-Case

The following categories of materials are considered on a case-by-case basis, based on overall environmental impact and material composition.

MATERIALS ALTERED ONLY THROUGH MICROBIAL FERMENTATION AND ARE HOME COMPOSTABLE:
Pure PHB or PHA products that are home compostable and are not created through chemical processes. See the Key Terms section for more information.

Please note: Not all products in this category are made equal. We vet each individual product that is made from PHA or PHB. Surfrider will continue to research the development and innovations of this type of material.

Recommended Products

STRAWS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Webstaurant or Cocktail Kingdom	NO
	Best Choice	Bamboo	Bambu	YES
	Good Alternative	Hay	Hay Straws	YES
	Good Alternative	Reed	Holy City Straws	YES
	Good Alternative	Wheat	Holy City Straws	YES
	Good Alternative	Bamboo	Bambu	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	Aardvark Straws or Webstaurant	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	World Centric	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	Boss Straw	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	Rigid Fiber	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	Nothing.Eco	YES

*For more info about Ocean Friendly Business discounts, contact OFR@SURFRIDER.ORG Product images provided by brands or found on product website.

Recommended Products

STRAWS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Good Alternative	Seaweed	Loliware	YES
	Good Alternative	Rice, Corn, Quinoa	Impasta Straws	YES
	Good Alternative	Cornstarch, Water	Corn Next	YES
	Good Alternative	Sugar, Water, Cornstarch, Bovine Gelatin	Sorbos	NO

TAKEOUT CONTAINERS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel with Silicone Lid	Klean Kanteen	YES
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel with Silicone Lid	ECOlunchbox	YES
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel with Silicone Lid	UKonserve	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Ahimsa	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Chico Bag	NO
	Good Alternative	Unlined Plant Fiber, Bamboo	World Centric, 6x6x3, 9x6x3, 8x8x3, 9x9x3, 9x9x3 Compartment	YES

*For more info about Ocean Friendly Business discounts, contact OFR@SURFRIDER.ORG Product images provided by brands or found on product website.

Recommended Products

TAKEOUT CONTAINERS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Good Alternative	Unlined Plant Fiber, Bamboo	Good Start Packaging	NO
	Good Alternative	Cardboard	Webstaurant	NO
	Good Alternative	Cardboard	Eco Products	NO
	Good Alternative	Unlined Paper	Webstaurant	NO
	Good Alternative	Paper with Seaweed Liner	Notpla	YES
	Good Alternative	Aluminum Foil	Webstaurant	NO

UTENSILS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Ahimsa	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Webstaurant	NO
	Best Choice	Bamboo	Bambu	YES
	Good Alternative	Wood	Birchware	YES

*For more info about Ocean Friendly Business discounts, contact OFR@SURFRIDER.ORG Product images provided by brands or found on product website.

Recommended Products

UTENSILS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Good Alternative	Wood	Webstaurant	NO
	Good Alternative	Wood (Tasting Spoon)	Webstaurant	NO
	Good Alternative	Paper	Rigid Fiber	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	World Centric Fork, Spoon, and Knife	YES
	Good Alternative	Bamboo	Hay Straws	YES
	Good Alternative	Bamboo	Holy City Straws	YES
	Good Alternative	Bamboo	World Centric Fork, Spoon, and Knife	YES

PLATES, TRAYS, & BOWLS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Porcelain	Webstaurant	NO
	Best Choice	Stoneware	Webstaurant	NO
	Best Choice	Coconut Shell	Coconut Bowls	NO

*For more info about Ocean Friendly Business discounts, contact OFR@SURFRIDER.ORG Product images provided by brands or found on product website.

Recommended Products

PLATES, TRAYS, & BOWLS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Ahimsa Tray and Plate	NO
	Good Alternative	Bamboo	Bambu or Webstaurant	YES
	Good Alternative	Fallen Palm Leaf	Dtocs	YES
	Good Alternative	Paper	Wasserstrom	NO
	Good Alternative	Paper	Webstaurant	NO

SAUCE CUPS AND RAMEKINS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Porcelain	Webstaurant	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Webstaurant	NO
	Good Alternative	Fallen Palm Leaf	Dtocs	YES
	Good Alternative	Aluminum	Webstaurant	NO

*For more info about Ocean Friendly Business discounts, contact OFR@SURFRIDER.ORG Product images provided by brands or found on product website.

Recommended Products

CUPS

Product	Rating	Material	Brand/Link	OFB Discount*
	Best Choice	Glass	Webstaurant	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Green Steel	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Steelys	NO
	Best Choice	Stainless Steel	Ahimsa	NO
	Best Choice	Stoneware	Webstaurant	NO
	Best Choice	Coconut Shell	The Coconut King	NO
	Best Choice	Silicone	Silipint Kids Cup	NO
	Good Alternative	Aluminum	Top Cup and Webstaurant	YES
	Good Alternative	Oat Bran, Wheat Flour, and Coconut Oil	Cupffee	NO

*For more info about Ocean Friendly Business discounts, contact OFR@SURFRIDER.ORG Product images provided by brands or found on product website.

Product Decision Matrix

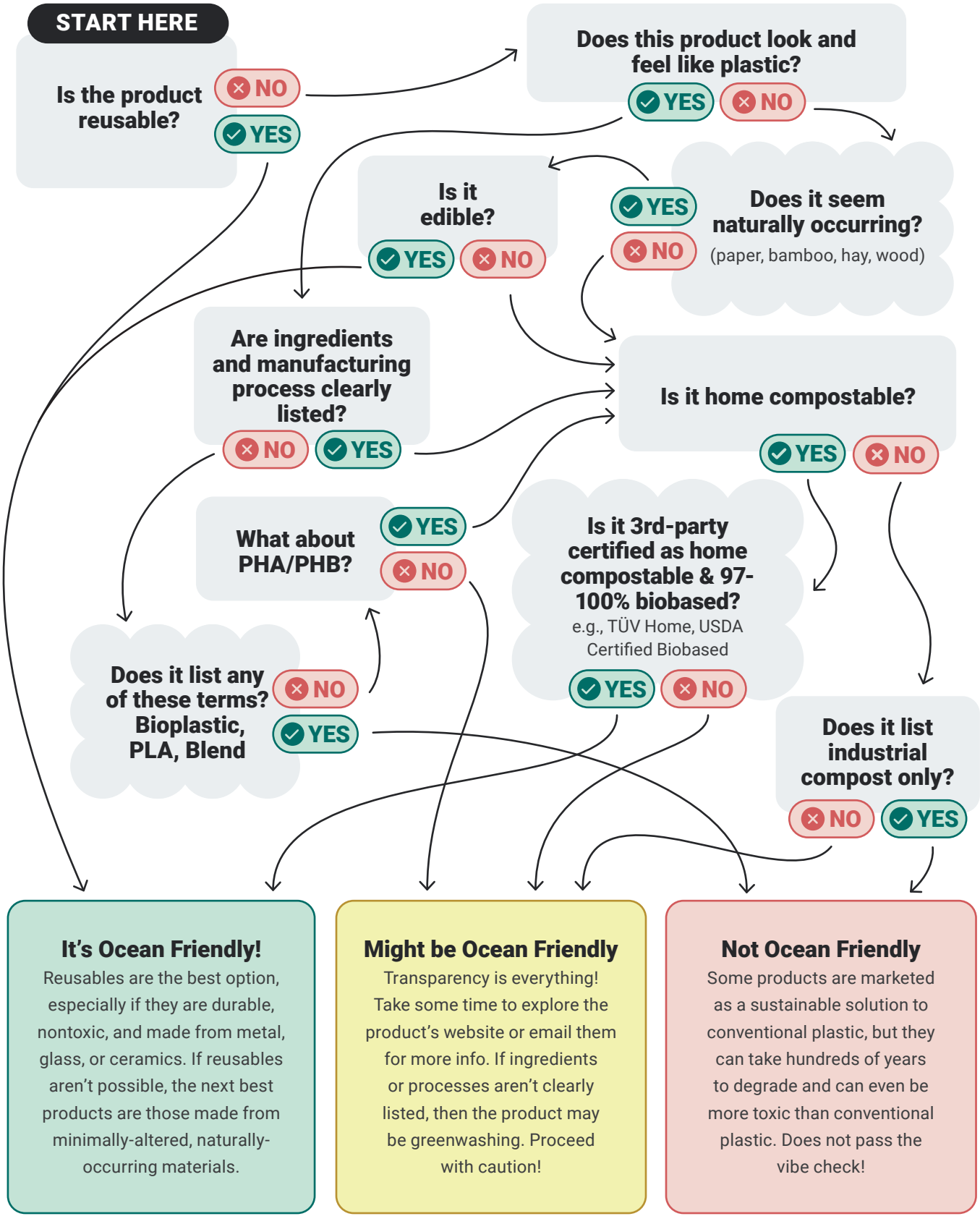
When reusables are not available, how do you find the most ocean friendly single-use product? Use this **tool to review products and avoid greenwashing**. If you can answer **yes across the board** – then the product is likely a **good option**.

Guidance	Specific Qualities	What it Means if the Answer is "No"
Product is made completely of naturally occurring materials	All product **ingredients are clearly listed** on the product website (if not right on the packaging)	Be wary as transparency is a must in this industry. Too often companies sneak plastics, plastic derivatives, or harmful chemicals (like PFAS!) into their products. Reach out to the company to get more information.
	Product **looks and feels different** from plastic	This product could have had its natural ingredients chemically altered to be identical to traditional plastics, taking years (or decades+) to fully breakdown, or designed in a way that only breaks down in industrial composters. It can also cause confusion for users on how best to dispose. As companies innovate in this industry there may be products that look and feel like plastic but answer 'yes' across the board in other categories and are promising options.
	Product is **certified as 97-100% bio-based** (e.g. USDA Biobased)*	Be wary as this can mean that fossil-fuel based plastics, plastic derivatives, or harmful chemicals have been added to the product, and it is therefore not "made of completely naturally occurring materials."
Product is able to breakdown in the natural environment	Product **does not require** industrial composting facilities to fully breakdown	This means that the product will only fully breakdown *if* it gets to an "industrial composting facility." Very few of these exist, and there are rarely distribution channels to get waste from your home or business to the facility. Some products certified as industrially compostable don't breakdown in the desired timeframe, resulting in pieces of partially degraded plastics being included in compost.
	Product is **certified as home compostable** (e.g. TUV OK Compost Home)**	This means that the product has not been confirmed to be able to fully breakdown in a home compost pile by a third-party certification. While certifications aren't perfect, they provide some assurance that the product will break down in the conditions stated, over a specified timeframe, and won't cause any toxicity. This last bit is extra important since many natural seeming products can be lined with toxic chemicals like PFAS.
Bonus! Product materials are born of the waste stream	Product materials are upcycled, and would otherwise be discarded	Some of the materials in this product were "purpose-grown" meaning you'll need to consider the embedded emissions and environmental impact that went into growing the source material (e.g. land clearing, habitat loss, fertilizers, pesticides).

**97-100% Biobased or brand is willing to provide full list of product ingredients to allow for due diligence.*
***Certified Home Compostable or made completely from a single, unprocessed, or minimally processed natural material that's undergone toxicity testing.*

Is This Product Ocean Friendly?

TAKE THIS QUIZ TO FIND OUT



Case Studies

Flying Fish Co.

Location: 3004 E Burnside St. Portland, OR
Industry: Fast Casual
Average Daily Guests: 200

Flying Fish Co. is a small family owned business, started by a 2nd generation fish monger, specializing in sustainable seafood and good vibes.

From Disposables to Reusables

Flying Fish Co. previously used single-use bioplastic cups which are costly, so they decided to switch to personalized washable and reusable stainless steel cups instead.

"The stainless steel cups keep beer colder for longer versus bioplastic, plus they can be washed and reused!"

– Owner

Ocean Friendly Practices

- Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.
- Paper or naturally occuring straws provided upon request.
- No expanded polystyrene is used (aka Styrofoam).
- No plastic bags are used for takeout or to go orders.
- Single-use utensils, straws, condiments, and other accessory items are provided only upon request.
- Beverages are not sold in plastic bottles.
- Proper recycling practices are followed.
- Vegetarian and vegan food options are offered regularly.
- Sustainable seafood is served.
- Concessions are not sold in plastic.
- Composting efforts are in place for food waste.
- No single-use plastic or bioplastic takeout containers.

Flying Fish saves $10,000 and 50,000 disposable cups from entering the waste stream annually by switching to reusable cups!

JT's Genuine Sandwich Shop

Location: 3970 N. Elston Ave Chicago, IL
Industry: Fast Casual
Average Daily Guests: 100-300

JT's is a family-owned business serving up Midwest classics, family favorites, and delicious sandwiches with an elevated touch.

Reusables for Onsite Dining

To become a Great Lakes Friendly Restaurant, JT's switched their disposable foodware items to reusables for onsite dining. See what they switched:

- Plastic Ramekin → Stainless Steel Ramekin
- Paper Soup Cup → Reusable Soup Mug
- Paper Container → Reusable Salad Bowl
- Paper Container → Reusable Food Boat
- Plastic Utensil → Metal Utensils

Great Lakes Friendly Practices

- Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.
- Paper or naturally occuring straws provided upon request.
- No expanded polystyrene is used (aka Styrofoam).
- No plastic bags are used for takeout or to-go orders.
- Single-use utensils, straws, condiments, and other accessory items are provided only upon request.
- Beverages are not sold in plastic bottles.
- Proper recycling practices are followed.
- Water conservation efforts are in place.
- Vegetarian and vegan food options are offered regularly.
- Sustainable seafood is served.
- Composting efforts are in place for food waste.

By switching to reusable foodware for onsite dining, JT's cut disposable foodware by 50% and saves about $25,500 a year.

Magnus On Water

Location: 12 Water Street Biddeford, ME
Industry: Bar & Restaurant
Average Daily Guests: 0-100

Magnus On Water is an intimate cocktail bar and restaurant that encourages guests to connect with one another, their community,and other cultures through warm hospitality,nature-inspired cocktails, and crave-worthy comfort foods.

Small Changes, Big Impact
Magnus on Water provides stainless steel straws to customers upon request or in a few specialty drinks rather than handing out disposable straws to every customer.

"Small operational decisions like switching to reusable straws can add up to meaningful change over time. Plus they add a polished touch to drinks!"

– Director of Beverage

Ocean Friendly Practices

- Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.
- Reusable straws are provided upon request.
- No expanded polystyrene is used (aka Styrofoam).
- No plastic bags are used for takeout or to-go orders.
- Single-use utensils, straws, condiments,and other accessory items are provided only upon request.
- Beverages are not sold in plastic bottles.
- Proper recycling practices are followed.
- Energy efficiency efforts are in place.
- Composting efforts are in place for food waste.
- Vegetarian and vegan options are offered.
- Water conservation efforts are in place.

Magnus On Water saves about $138 and 22,000 disposable straws from entering the waste stream every year by providing reusable straws upon request or in a few specialty drinks.

Mitch's Seafood

Location: 1403 Scott Street San Diego, CA
Industry: Fast Casual
Average Daily Guests: 500+

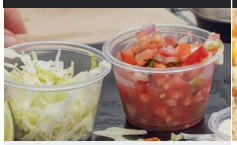
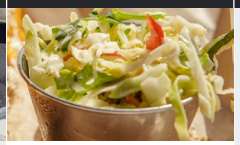
Established in 2008 by three fishing families,Mitch's Seafood specializes in serving "local fish from local fishermen" from the waters of San Diego. At this waterfront restaurant you'll enjoy the quintessential San Diego seafood dining experience.

Ocean Friendly Practices

- Only reusable foodware is used for onsite dining.
- Paper or naturally occuring straws provided upon request.
- No expanded polystyrene is used (aka Styrofoam).
- No plastic bags are used for takeout or to-go orders.
- Single-use utensils, straws, condiments,and other accessory items are provided only upon request.
- Beverages are not sold in plastic bottles.
- Proper recycling practices are followed.
- No single-use plastic or bioplastic containers are used for takeout.
- Vegetarian and vegan food options are offered regularly.
- Energy efficiency efforts are in place.
- Sustainable seafood is served.
- Composting efforts are in place for food waste.

Switching to Reusables

To become an Ocean Friendly Restaurant, Mitch's Seafood switched their single-use plastic foodware items to reusables for onsite dining. The General Manager said, "we've received great feedback about our changes and our food looks so much more presentable on reusable dishes compared to single-use items." Plus they see cost savings! See the breakdown:

Disposable Item	Reusable Swap	Annual Savings
 Plastic Ramekin	 Stainless Steel Ramekin	**$1,194**
 Plastic Cup for Wine	 Reusable Cup for Wine	**$3,237**
Estimated Annual Savings		**$4,431**

In 2023, Mitch's Seafood saved $4,386 during their busy summer months (June-August) alone by switching to reusable and paper foodware items!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