HOW-TO GUIDE FOR RETAILERS

Oregon's Refillable Container Rules

Help your customers reduce waste — and keep your business in compliance — with this guide to Oregon's rules for accepting customer-provided durable food and beverage containers.

Oregon state law (SB 545) allows retail and restaurants to accept customers' reusable food containers for takeout orders, while still meeting Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) guidelines. Allowing customers to use their own reusable containers makes them happy, reduces waste, and saves you money.

What's allowed

What's allowed for customer-provided containers:

- **Over-the-counter foods:*** Employees can fill visibly clean durable containers with deli and prepared foods, meat, cheese, and seafood.
- **Bulk foods:*** Customers can fill visibly clean durable containers with bulk foods that do not require refrigeration for safety (e.g. nuts, candy, granola, wrapped candy, dry pasta, or rice).
- **Beverages:** Both customers and employees can fill visibly clean, durable beverage containers.

**You'll need to create a written plan – see below. (Good news: Written plans are not required for beverage refills, though you are required to have a contamination-free process.)*

What's not allowed

What's not allowed for customer-provided containers:

- Customers cannot use personal containers for buffets, salad bars, or other unpackaged, temperature-controlled foods.
- Employees cannot accept containers that are dirty, chipped, cracked, or not intended for hot food or drinks (if using for hot food or drinks).

Here's how to follow the rules

1 Create a Simple Plan (Use our free template!)

Write a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to outline:

- How your staff will handle customer-owned containers safely.
- Steps you'll take to prevent contamination.
- How you'll educate customers.

2 Keep your plan onsite

- The state rules require your plan to be kept on-site and available for review by your local public health authority.
- Keep copies of educational signage with your written plan for review by the local health authority.

3 Train staff

- Customer-provided containers must be visibly clean and durable. If used for hot food or beverages the containers must be temperature-appropriate.
- Scoops, tongs, or spouts used to dispense food should never touch consumer-owned containers.
- Bulk food areas must be monitored and maintained by employees where reusable containers may be used.

4 Educate customers

- Post a sign encouraging customers to bring their own reusable containers for drinks, bulk foods, and takeaway foods.
- Let customers know containers must be clean and reusable.
- If you offer a salad bar or hot food bar, post signs letting customers know they cannot use their own containers in these areas.
- Post signs telling customers that once food touches their container, it cannot be put back.

5 Learn more about the code

- ODA's Refilling Returnable Containers Fact Sheet
- ODA 2023 Retail Food Code
- Find your local health inspector

For more information and resources:
www.choose2reuse.org

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