

Reduce Party Waste

No one likes garbage after a party or picnic, especially in Seattle where we are great recyclers. Now you can make easy choices upfront and sort leftovers so your garbage can is hardly used.

Food

The [2012 National Resources Defense Council Report](#) revealed that Americans throw away 40% of their food, which also wastes resources and labor producing that food, such as water, petroleum oil (gas), electricity, and land – not to mention animal lives. This waste plus financial costs are a good reason to reduce!

Food waste reduction tips:

- Don't fall back on typical party fare and discover everyone is vegan, gluten-free, and off sugar! Tailor your menu to what your guests will eat to prevent unnecessary waste.
- Store edible leftovers safely (refrigerate, freeze), track them, and enjoy again. Or give away to guests as they leave. For large events, contact [Food Lifeline](#) or a local food bank in advance to find out how to share leftovers with hungry people.
- Finally, *all* food can go in your food (and yard) waste cart. Dump it loose, [wrap it up in uncoated paper](#), or put it into [approved compostable bags](#) before dropping in the cart. Remember: *all* food waste is accepted in the food waste cart, including shells, meat, fish, cheese, veggies, grains, fruit, bones, etc. But no plastic bags are accepted. All plastic ruins the compost.

Paper and Plastic Table Settings

The best choice is always durable: cloth tablecloths and napkins, ceramic, glass, or sturdy plastic cups, plates, and bowls. While water is used to clean them, the overall impact on resources is much less than using disposable products. However, durable is not always an option. When disposable is necessary, shop smart and sort for maximum recycling and composting.

Shop for the right disposable stuff:

- Choose plain uncoated plates and bowls – no shine! The shine is a plastic coating. If it's *uncoated* it can go in your food and yard waste cart, food-soiled and all. If it's shiny, it has to go into the garbage – bummer! Find uncoated products at most local stores at a similar cost. Empty plastic and paper cups go into the recycling. (Not the food waste cart)
- Empty bottles, cans, and (juice/milk) jugs go into the recycling. Put caps in the garbage.
- Catch plastic utensils in a bowl. Wash and reuse. Otherwise, put them in the garbage.
- Wipe and reuse plastic tablecloths if possible. Otherwise they go in the garbage. Reuse or put clean paper tablecloths in the recycling cart. Food-soiled paper tablecloths go in the food and yard waste cart.
- Paper napkins, and towels go in the food waste cart.
- Clean aluminum foil goes in the recycling cart. Keep the foil open so the recycling facility can see it is clean. Soiled aluminum foil goes in the garbage, along with all plastic film.
- Clean pizza boxes can be recycled. Food-soiled pizza boxes go in the food waste cart.

- Plastic straws and plastic chopsticks go in the garbage.
- Wooden chopsticks and skewers go in the food waste cart.
- Have a different item and not sure where it goes? [Look it up.](#)

Note: You can choose to purchase Cedar Grove compostable products, accepted in your home food waste cart. Otherwise, avoid products marked “biodegradable” or “compostable” as they may not break down in the local compost facility. However, plain uncoated paper plates and bowls of all brands are accepted!

Set up

Make sorting easy for your guests

- Follow city color-coding when labeling bins. Recycling is blue, Food (and yard) waste is green, Garbage is black, gray, or other neutrals.
- Tape examples of what is accepted above each bin. Guests won’t have to guess whether their plates are recyclable or compostable.
- If you are willing to wash and reuse utensils, set up a bowl to catch them and make it clear with signage and samples of the utensils. Otherwise, tape examples to the garbage can.
- If possible, find volunteers to stand by the stations to help guests with sorting.
- [Order or download flyers or posters](#) to help your sorting efforts.

At the end of the party, distribute your recycling, composting, and garbage bags so that they go to their intended destinations. Celebrate how little garbage there is! It’s a win-win for your garbage costs, your recycling pride, and for the Earth.