



**MORNINGTON
PENINSULA**
Shire

FACT FILE

REUSABLE TAKEAWAY FOOD CONTAINERS

OVERVIEW

There is an increasing expectation for food businesses to provide takeaway food in reusable containers that are either offered by the venue via a return program or supplied by customers (BYO). This includes using reusable cups for takeaway beverages or using glass, metal or plastic tubs to buy meat and ready-made meals, or to take-home leftovers from restaurants.

With the State Government implementing a ban in February 2023 on the sale and supply of single-use plastic straws, drink stirrers, cutlery, plates, cotton buds and EPS foodware and cups, reusables become a critical option. More and more businesses are embracing the use of reusable containers to reduce their environmental footprint, improve their venue's reputation as a responsible business and strengthen customer loyalty.

Managed correctly, reusables are a safe, sustainable option for food businesses and patrons throughout the Mornington Peninsula.

This Fact File provides guidelines for food businesses, community groups and food consumers on the safe, hygienic and sustainable use of reusable food cups and containers.

Question 1: Is there any law or regulation stopping consumers from using their own containers for any food?

No. Victoria's food safety legislation (the Food Act 1984, National Food Safety Standards, the Meat Industry Act 1993 and the Seafood Safety Act 2003) **does not** prohibit food businesses, retail butcher shops and seafood retailers from accepting reusable containers from customers. For further information, please refer to [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#).

If a food business has a policy to refuse customer containers for the storage of food purchased, then that is a business decision rather than a restraint due to food safety legislation.

Question 2: Can a customer take home leftovers from a restaurant in their own container?

Yes. There is no provision under the Victorian Food Act or National Food Safety Standards that prevents a business from allowing a customer to take home leftovers from a restaurant in their own container.

If customers take leftovers home, they should either eat them immediately or put them in the fridge immediately to consume within 1-2 days. Throw out any high-risk food that has been left in the temperature danger zone of between 5°C and 60°C for more than four hours.

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/food-safety-when-eating-out>. We encourage businesses to provide this information to customers before they choose to take the food home.

Question 3: What's the process for setting it up safely in my business?

1. Our advice is for all businesses to have a set of clear guidelines or policy that sets out how customers can take home food and beverages using reusables.
2. Make these guidelines part of all staff inductions, so that everyone in the team is clear on the business's approach.
3. It is the customers responsibility to ensure that their container is clean, so that there is no risk of any food safety issues occurring.

Question 4: What should be in my business's REUSABLE GUIDELINES?

- You have the authority to approve or decline customers from bringing their own containers. Make it clear what stance your business has.
- For businesses that choose to accept customers' BYO containers, this can be done so safely, provided basic hygiene measures are followed in accordance with the relevant Act, Code and Regulations. Train your staff on how to accept reusables and serve food and drink in them safely, such as using a contactless pour (pictured below) T
- What staff should say if a customer brings a cup or container that does not look clean, is not designed to be reused or is unsuitable for any reason.
 - You can politely decline to accept it. Explain to the customer why their container is unsuitable and advise them on what types of containers you will accept to encourage them to try again next time. You could also have some reusable containers available for purchase for that one-off occasion.
- You may choose to encourage the uptake of reusables by simply thanking your customers for their commitment to reducing single-use packaging, or by considering a financial incentive for customers who BYO containers.
- Displaying a prominent sign encouraging BYO. Download here: [Signage | Plastic Free Places](#) or: [Single-use plastics ban | Campaign asset library \(sustainability.vic.gov.au\)](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION

For Food Safety, Cleaning and Sanitising information, please contact Mornington Peninsula Shire's Environmental Health Team - phone 5950 1373 email food@mornpen.vic.gov.au

Food Standards Australia New Zealand - www.foodstandards.gov.au

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services - www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety

Plastic Free Mornington Peninsula's Business program [Plastic Free Mornington Peninsula](#)

Mornington Peninsula Shire's Business website [Mornington Peninsula Business \(mpbusiness.com.au\)](http://mpbusiness.com.au)

Sustainability Victoria's [Accepting reusables at your business | Sustainability Victoria](#)