

Introduction

The intent of the policy is to provide Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and operators of food premises with a consistent framework for protecting the health and safety of customers when food is dispensed in reusable food containers (reusable containers).

This policy does not require operators to dispense food in reusable containers.

Background

Local governments in B.C. are increasingly seeking to reduce the use of single-use containers in their municipalities as many of these containers end up in land-fills. One area of their focus is single-use containers used for take-out food purchased by customers. A study suggests that nearly 50% of all garbage collected from public waste bins is take-out containers and disposable cups.

(<https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/single-use-items.aspx>)

To reduce waste, some food premises operators want to use reusable containers for delivering or dispensing their food products to customers, where possible.

Food Safety Legislative Framework

[Public Health Act](#): Section 18

[Food Premises Regulation](#) (under the *Public Health Act*): Sections 12, 16, 17, 23 and 24

[Food Safety Act](#): Sections 2 and 3

Policy

An operator of a food premises is responsible for food safety in their premises. An operator must ensure the safety and cleanliness of all utensils, containers, and food contact surfaces (Food Premises Regulation (FPR) sections 16 and 17; *Food Safety Act*, sections 2 and 3). This includes a customer's own container.

Operational Procedures

Customer-supplied Containers

An operator must update the premises' food safety plan and sanitation plan to specify their responsibilities related to using reusable containers in the premises, safely distributing or dispensing food to a customer, and preventing cross contamination of food contact surfaces. These plans must be submitted to and approved by an EHO before dispensing food in reusable containers.

Operators should also ensure that staff are trained in the procedures described in the food safety plan and sanitation plan.

The food safety plan and sanitation plan should address the following:

1. Identify the foods or beverages that can be served to customers in their reusable containers.
2. Containers must be in good condition, food grade and easily cleanable. Food grade containers are made of materials that are intended to come into contact with food products.

3. Procedures for inspecting the container to confirm that surfaces are visibly clean and are in good condition.
4. Procedures to refuse to fill dirty, non-food grade or damaged containers.
5. Procedures for filling reusable containers so that food, equipment, food contact surfaces, containers or utensils are not contaminated.
6. Food handlers should practice good personal hygiene and wash their hands before and after handling customer-supplied containers.
7. If a food premises claims to be allergen-free, the premises should not accept customer-supplied containers.
8. Single-use, take out or disposable containers are not considered to be reusable containers.

Reusable Containers Provided by a Food Premises

Reusable containers provided by a food premises may or may not be returned to the same customer.

If reusable containers are washed and sanitized at the food premises, the premises should be equipped with ware-washing facilities consisting of a commercial dishwasher, a 2-compartment sink and adequate drying and storage space.

The food safety plan and sanitation plan should address the following:

- Identify the foods or beverages that may be served to customers in the reusable containers.
- Containers must be in good condition, food grade, dishwasher-safe, easily washable and capable of being sanitized.
- Containers are to be regularly inspected, and those in poor condition should be discarded.
- Procedures to indicate the flow of incoming soiled reusable containers to outgoing cleaned and sanitized containers, including handling and storage.

References

B.C. *Food Safety Act*, [SBC 2002] Chapter 28.

B.C. *Public Health Act*, [SBC 2008] Chapter 28.

B.C. *Public Health Act*, Food Premises Regulation, B.C. Reg. 210/99.

Canadian Food Retail and Food Services Code (2016). Retrieved from:
<http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/pdf/foodservicescode.pdf>