

How to Recycle Common Take-Out Packaging

We're currently spending more time at home and our daily routine has changed. You're likely cooking a lot more at home – whether it's breakfast or lunch or, if you're like most of the Recycle BC team, snacking throughout the day thanks to the ever-present temptation of the fridge. Suddenly, it's 6:00 pm and time to prepare another meal and add to your accumulating dish count for the day. After five days of this routine – cook, eat, wash, repeat – the idea of ordering take-out evolves from a nice distraction to feeling like a must-have break.

In British Columbia, many restaurants are still open for take-out and delivery. Packaging for take-out meals varies between restaurants and most of it is recyclable. Check out our list below for commonly used packaging for take-out and how you can recycle it:

Hard plastic containers:

This one is easy – just empty and rinse. Both the lid and container go in your blue box or container recycling. This includes the firm plastic lids that will bend if you push on them, and commonly come with sushi take-out. While not accepted in all areas in Canada, Recycle BC does accept black plastic so toss it in your bin.



Foam containers:

If your favourite take-out establishment uses foam packaging, foam can be recycled at a recycling depot. Even if you've emptied and rinsed the container so it looks brand new, please do not put it in your home recycling bins. Foam breaks and crumbles easily, and is difficult to separate from other recyclables. This causes contamination and affects the recyclability of the rest of your blue box. Please check our list of depot service updates at RecycleBC.ca/COVID19 to ensure your closest depot is open and currently accepting foam. The upside is that foam is very lightweight and easy to store (stack the pieces!) so you can save them up for your next depot trip.



Pizza boxes:

“Are pizza boxes recyclable or do they go in the green bin?” This is a common question and the answer is both! Pizza boxes can be recycled with paper as long as they're empty, there isn't any significant amount of cheese or sauce stuck to them, and they aren't heavily soiled with grease. A few spots here and there is OK.



Paper containers:

Paper containers can be included with your paper recycling if they are squeaky clean. The brown kraft paper containers may have a thin plastic poly-coat lining, and that's okay. They can still go with your paper recycling.



Foil wrap and containers:

Another simple one: yes, they're recyclable! Remove any stuck-on food, rinse, and put in your blue box. Some foil containers come with a foil-lined paper lid which is not recyclable due to the material mix. Put those in your garbage. Foil wrap also goes in your blue box provided it's clean.



Paper Wrappers:

These are *conceivably* recyclable if you can ensure they don't have any food stuck to them and aren't heavily soiled by grease or sauces. But when was the last time you saw a cheeseburger wrapper that wasn't stained with cheese and grease?



Paper bags and drink trays:

Yes, absolutely. This one feels like a freebie. Paper recycling, here we come!



Beverage cups:

Both paper and plastic beverage cups are recycled in your blue box. Plastic lids also go in the blue box and paper sleeves go with paper recycling.



Plastic packaging labeled compostable, biodegradable, oxodegradable, or photodegradable is not accepted in your recycling bin.

We hope this list helps with your take-out clean up – enjoy your meal!