



Compostable Product Fact Sheet

Naturally Compostable Materials

- Food scraps (includes meat, bones, dairy products, coffee grounds – really any kind of food)
- Flowers, plants, landscape vegetation, leaves, etc.
- Newspaper and other non-coated, non-glossy paper products

Food Serviceware Products

- Food soiled paper: paper towels, paper napkins, lightly coated or non-coated paper cups, plates, bowls, pizza boxes, coffee filters, etc. (The rule of thumb is if it is 90% paper and you can rip it, you can compost it)
- Utensils, made from compostable corn or potato, that are BPI certified (not plastic!)
- Bagasse (sugarcane) plates, bowls, clamshell containers
- Clear PLA (poly lactic acid or "plastic look alike") products made from corn – cups, deli containers, straws, lids, clamshells, etc. (these **must** be labeled with a green stripe or sticker for identification as compostable and be BPI certified for compostability – a list of products and manufacturers that meet this certification can be found at : <http://www.bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved/2.html>)
- Waxy cardboard

Terminology & Additional Information for the Curious

Many food products are being marketed as compostable, biodegradable or even degradable. Although the three terms sound similar, there is a distinct difference between these kinds of products.

A product that is **compostable** has been tested and meets the ASTM 6400 standard for compostability. Compostable products will decompose in a commercial composting operation within a certain period of time, and no toxins will be released during the breakdown process. The BPI certification means a third party has tested and confirmed that a product will breakdown per the ASTM standard. **This is the preferred product type for use with food, so all materials can be composted successfully.**

A product that is **biodegradable** will break down when exposed to naturally occurring microorganisms, but does not meet specific time requirements to do so, and may leave toxins once the break down process is complete. Although better than products labeled as degradable, they will not break down in sufficient time for processing at our commercial composting facility.

Products that are labeled as **degradable** should be avoided. They do not meet any requirements to break down with naturally occurring microorganisms and may leave toxic residue along the way. It is important to note that almost everything is degradable. Even lamp posts, given a few hundred years, are degradable.

To summarize, a product may be degradable, but not biodegradable, and a biodegradable product may not be compostable. **Please select only compostable products, so they will break down completely at our commercial composting facility. Green labels indicating their compostability will help ensure that these products are not mistaken for plastics.**

Important Note: Neither a compostable nor a biodegradable product will break down in a landfill. In landfill studies, 60 year old newspapers and carrot tops still looked as though they had just been thrown away. This is because a landfill locks out oxygen, which is required for materials to break down naturally. If materials break down anaerobically, or without oxygen, this usually produces methane, a greenhouse gas (GHG) 23 times more potent in the atmosphere than Carbon Dioxide (CO₂).

When possible, it is best to use reusable service ware for your luncheons and food related events. This saves the cost of disposable, single-use products, the cost of sorting through the trash to recover compostable materials, and the possible contribution to GHG to the atmosphere if the materials end up in the landfill.