

Ball Corporation

Project Location Type: Cafeteria

Project Type: Reusable Exchange Program

Project Location: [Ball Corporation](#), Headquartered in Broomfield, CO

Project Description: In 2009 this large packaging and aerospace company launched company-wide sustainability initiatives that extended to the [Guckenheimer](#)-managed cafeteria. Food Service Director Tim Leary's goal was to replace the 50,000 Styrofoam to-go containers he was buying each year. Although he tried compostables, he found that they would break down too quickly – sometimes before a meal was completed. They were “better trash” but still “trash”. So he set up a reusable exchange program using G.E.T.'s Eco-Takeout to-go boxes. Tim chose Eco-Takeouts because of their durability, nesting stackability and the fact that they could be recycled when they finally do wear out.

Foodservice/Corporate Setup: Ball's 3 mile corporate campus is made up of seven buildings where 400 meals a day are served. For their reusable exchange program Ball buys all the containers - there is no cost to employees to use them. The honor system has worked well, 80% to 90% of the containers are returned to the cafeteria promptly. The rest are left stacked in the kitchens or break rooms for pick-up by cafeteria staff. Tim also provides incentives for non-foodservice employees to return “strays.” It's not uncommon for a custodian to return ten containers found in odd places, the effort is rewarded with a free cookie or soda. “The same people who drink the last cup of coffee and don't make a fresh pot or don't put more paper in the copy machine are the same ones who don't return Ecos,” he said.

The initial order was 1000 cases bought in 2009; in 2010 there were about 400 left from that first order. Tim finds that each one lasts about a year unless it has been dropped or thrown around. Tim has bought additional cases because he had some money in his budget and wanted to “stock up.” There are usually about 100 “out” at any given time. To test the Eco-Takeouts Tim's team took samples and froze them, used them in the microwave with broccoli, spaghetti sauce, and onions and then washed them. They passed the test. He says that a multi-door dishwasher is better than a single since you need to be able to wash more Ecos at a time to have enough on hand. There also needs to be sufficient space and drying time for wet Ecos.

Eco-Takeout To-Go Boxes™

- BPA free, NSF listed
- Commercial dishwasher safe
- Microwave safe
- Recyclable #5 polypropylene
- Break, stain & leak resistant
- Can print logo or message on top
- Various container sizes available
- Jade or clear

Results: Instead of buying 50,000 styrofoam containers every year at \$0.25 (\$12,500/year), Tim now buys 1000 Eco-Takeouts about every other year for about \$5000. Besides saving \$800/month, he also saves 2 hours/day in labor because there is less cubic feet of trash to manage and one less dumpster to empty every other week. He does buy about 10 styrofoam containers/week, but they are only available upon request for visitors or employees leaving campus and not coming back right away. The fact that G.E.T. is constantly improving Eco-Takeouts Tim views as another plus: textured surface, stacking feet, clear, ability to brand them, leak-resistant, etc.

Lessons Learned: The keys to success were as follows:

- Top-down support. Ball executives eat in the same cafeteria with other employees. They use Eco-Takeouts™ and return them to the cafeteria, just like everyone else.
- Company-wide commitment to sustainability.
- A DVD produced by corporate communications to introduce the program and explain how to participate. Email reminders were also sent during the first few weeks of the program: “Bring your containers back!”
- Foodservice management commitment and staff buy-in. Yes, it is more work on the foodservice team to maintain an Ecos program. However, the cost savings and environmental benefits outweigh the additional effort required.

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