

Project Location Type: Main Student Cafeteria

Project Type: Reusable Exchange Program

Project Location: [Xavier University](#), Cincinnati, OH

Project Description: One year after the launch of G.E.T.'s Eco-Takeouts, Ed Devoid, Chartwell's Food Services Manager for Xavier University, read about the reusable to-go boxes in a 2010 trade magazine. Since he was spending over \$36,000 per year for Styrofoam to-go boxes at the main cafeteria's all-you-can-eat facility, he decided to give them a try.

Foodservice/Corporate Setup: Everyone at Xavier with a meal plan gets a to-go box, it's built into the cost. When a student uses the box and brings it back but doesn't need a box for that day they get a voucher card for the next visit. There's a \$5 charge if the box or card is lost. Those that refuse to be a part of the exchange or are visiting and need a meal to-go are charged \$1 for the cardboard compostable version. Ed estimates he spends approximately \$30/week on cardboard ones. Ed's cafeteria serves 4800-4900 meals per day and both students and faculty participate. He went from 500 styrofoam containers each day x 220 days open (110,000 landfill-headed pieces of Styrofoam) at a paper purchase cost total of \$46,000, to only spending \$16,000 on the first set of Eco-Takeouts, a \$30,000 savings the first year alone. Although the Eco-Takeout containers do get lost, stolen or busted, for the most part each year gets better with how the students treat them and last year he only bought 4000 boxes, some were bought just to have as stock. The Eco-Takeouts have the Xavier logo and message screenprinted on them and Ed has calculated that they pay for themselves after 8-10 uses.

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: Presently in their fourth year (2014), Ed says the reusable to-go boxes are a part of the Xavier culture now. He's made great strides in other areas of recycling, too. Their food waste goes to a composter and all the cardboard they recycle pays for the guys who pick up the compost. Without the volume of Styrofoam he is now down from 28 yards of waste removed twice a week from across the campus to 3 yards once per week. 25,000 meals served each week and almost zero waste. The students have also commented how the Eco-Takeouts keep the hot food hotter than the Styrofoam and there are less spills because of the leak-resistant design.

Lessons Learned: Overcoming objections:

- Ed had other food services companies come to visit his operation who even after seeing the success didn't think it would work for them. Ed's response: Just do it.
- To the objection about an exchange program being less hygienic, Ed points out that people reuse plates that get washed over and over and to his knowledge Styrofoam comes from a MOLD and is never ever washed before it's used to carry food.
- Any commercial dishwasher with racks will work for cleaning the Eco-Takeouts, they open and stand in the machine quite well.
- Ed knew the students would embrace the Eco-Takeouts but the biggest fans have turned out to be the campus staff, everyone from attorneys to professors. Final bit of advice: don't wait for all involved to buy into it and don't think you're too busy to try to implement it because you want the operation to go perfectly, the longer you wait the more money you waste.

Point of Contact: Food Service Director, Ed Devoid, devoide@xavier.edu, 513-745-1023

Interview Video: <https://www.cresbicrate.com/reusable/eco-takeouts>