

McGill Sustainable Events Certification Program

Reducing Food Packaging Waste

Why?

Reducing packaged food takes thought and forward planning, but it is easily accomplished by keeping a few tips in mind and ultimately can make a big difference to your event's footprint. Give yourself plenty of time to research various food options for your event and plan a timeline and budget around procuring sustainable food options.

How?

Consider alternatives to catering

- If appropriate, make your event a potluck! Homemade dishes are often a low-waste and tasty option.
- Rather than offering catering, inform participants to bring their own lunches or snacks to your event.

Buy in bulk

- Several grocery stores have bulk sections where you can purchase snacks while avoiding packaging. Be sure to bring your own bags and containers when buying bulk foods to avoid using the store's plastic bags.
- Choose fruit or vegetables instead of packaged snacks like chips, granola bars, and cookies. Instead of buying pre-cut fruit and vegetable platters served in plastic, create your own platters or provide loose whole foods. Remember to bring your own produce bags while shopping!

Review packaged products carefully

- Avoid individually wrapped portions.
- Check to see if the item you are buying comes in recyclable packaging. Remember that plastic #6 is not recyclable. To find out on what materials are recyclable, download the [Ça va où?](#) app.
 - Choose paper or cardboard wrapping over plastic packaging.
 - When disposing of an item, make sure packaging is clean before it goes in the recycling bins.

Catering recommendations

- Request options that avoid unnecessary packaging:
 - Limit or eliminate bottled beverages. Request that beverages come in pitchers, including dairy and dairy alternatives for coffee and tea. Add fruit to water pitchers for a flavor-infused option.
 - Request a bowl of sugar rather than individual sweetener sachets and reusable spoons instead of coffee stirrers for coffee and tea.
 - Ask for reusable serving utensils rather than plastic utensils.
 - Request that food arrive in reusable dishware or wrapped in paper/aluminum rather than in plastic.
 - Request platters rather than individually wrapped portions.
 - Choose fruit and vegetables as snacks rather than packaged options like chips or muesli bars.
- Invite your staff or attendees to bring containers with them in order to take home any leftover food.