Make Your Neighborhood Event Zero Waste!

Whether you are having a barbecue with a few neighbors, hosting a family reunion or throwing a neighborhood block party, you can make it a Zero Waste Event. Planning ahead is the key – the choices you make ahead of time about what to buy and serve at your event will set you up for success reducing, reusing, recycling, or composting everything you generate the day of your event. These simple tips can help you throw a great party that's not only a good time, but takes care of the health of our community and environment too!

What to Serve

- **Avoid individually wrapped single serving items.** Serve bite-size or finger foods that require no utensils or choose entrées that can be served in large containers. Pasta in a large bowl or a platter of sub sandwiches are great options.
- **Plan ahead to avoid wasting food.** Try to estimate attendance when preparing food or placing orders for catering. Consider inviting guests to bring reusable containers (or provide them) to bring home leftovers. If you're keeping the leftovers, store them well so you can eat them later.
- **Hire a Zero Waste Caterer.** More and more restaurants and caterers offer services that make a zero waste event easy. Ask questions about what they bring the food in, or serve it on. Some will even provide containers for recycling and composting!

What to Serve On or In

- **Use reusable dishes,** or encourage participants to bring their own. Some neighborhoods or friend groups create a "community-owned" set of dishes, cups, utensils, serving ware and cloth napkins and tablecloths that can travel from party to party. Outside parties can set up an easy rinse or wash station with a few buckets or dishpans of water and a towel. Serve beverages from pitchers and glasses rather than single-serving, one-use bottles or cans.
- **Use easily recyclable items.** Not all recyclables are equal. Aluminum cans and glass bottles can be made into cans and bottles over and over again, providing the most environmental benefit.
- **Avoid plastics**, if possible, especially plastics that are not recyclable. All plastics pose health risks to people and the environment, even if they are recycled.
  - Beware disposable cups: most are made from polystyrene – #6 and are not recyclable.
  - Most plastic food & beverage containers are recyclable, but not #3 or #6, or black plastics
  - Please empty, rinse, put caps or lids back on when you can
- Remember that **milk cartons and juice boxes** are recyclable too.
- **Use compostable service ware:** While reusable items are always a better environmental choice, compostable cups, plates, and service ware made from plants are available to replace disposable plastic products made from petroleum. Looking for the "BPI-certified" label will ensure the products you're buying will completely break down into dirt when at large-scale composting facility. (These products are not designed to break down in a backyard compost bin.)

Make Dirt, Not Waste!

Compost food scraps at home. If you have a backyard compost bin, you can collect food waste like fruit and veggie scraps and even some non-recyclable paper products like napkins or paper towels. Meat, dairy and greasy foods should not be put in a backyard bin.

If you want to start composting at home, we can help! Call Eureka Recycling or visit our composting website at www.makedirtnotwaste.org for resources to get you started today!

Compost even more in your green bin or a drop off site. More and more cities are offering composting collection or drop off sites. These programs take the material to large-scale facilities that can handle things that your backyard bins can't – like meat, bones, dairy products, and compostable utensils and service ware. Call your County or City to see what your options are for large-scale composting.

Setting the Scene & Communicating with your Guests

- **Provide enough containers for recycling, compost, and trash.** Limit the number of trash containers and make sure that no trash container stands alone. Lids help a lot! Be sure they are next to clearly labeled recycling and composting containers so that it is easy for people to make the choice to recycle and compost.
- **Clearly label containers at all locations.** Pictures, lists, and symbols in combination are most effective. Instead of just the word "Cans," including a picture of a can and the "chasing arrows" recycling symbol is more likely to be used. And, kids who can't read will know what to do, too!
- **Place containers in obvious places where they will be visible and accessible.** Containers near eating areas and exits often do the trick!
- **Tell your guests this is a zero waste event!** Recycling, composting, and waste reduction practices vary from city to city and from home to home, so take a minute to briefly explain what your guests can compost and recycle at your event, and that you're aiming for zero! Make it a fun challenge and get them on board.
- **Monitor your recycling and trash containers.** Mistakes happen. Keep an eye on your containers to make sure items are going in the right place. Ask kids at the event to help with this—they are great at getting others to recycle and compost!

Resources in the Twin Cities

Containers: The cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and Ramsey and Hennepin counties have containers to borrow for events.

Labels & Signs: Ramsey and Hennepin counties have stickers available for containers if you're using your own. www.ramseycounty.us www.hennepin.us

Compostable Products: BPI-certified compostable products available twice annually through Eureka Recycling's Zero Waste Buying Co-op. www.eurekarecycling.org

Zero Waste Caterers: Many of our restaurant partners offer catering and pay special attention to helping make your event zero waste. www.makedirtnotwaste.org