

From: Anne Moser <anne@backhausbread.com>

Sent: Monday, January 18, 2021 1:39 PM

To: Clerk <clerk@cityofsanmateo.org>

Cc: Robert Moser <robert@backhausbread.com>; Lindsey Amodei <lindsey@backhausbread.com>

Subject: City of San Mateo Proposed Disposable Food Service Ware Regulations

Dear Madam/Sir:

We have been made aware that the City of San Mateo is considering adopting regulations to restrict the use of plastic disposable food service ware in an effort to reduce pollution, and we thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback prior to the new regulations being adopted.

While we as a Certified Green Business applaud the effort to reduce waste, pollution, and the overall environmental impact of businesses operating in the City of San Mateo, we have a few questions and concerns that I would like to outline below.

One of the first questions that came up for us upon reading the letter sent out by the City Manager's Office was "Why would compostable plastics not be allowed under the new regulations?" While planning our retail operation, we have taken great care to make sure that any items provided to the customer are compostable. We understand that compostable or landfill-biodegradable plastics do not decompose in every environment, especially not in a marine environment, so eliminating their use would be preferable, but it does feel like the regulations are going quite far, when a huge impact could already be made by banning petroleum based plastics. A follow-up question to that would be regarding the exemptions: "If no reasonable feasible non-plastic compostable product exists, items may be exempt." Who decides what is reasonably feasible and how will this be enforced? For example, a paper straw might not appear to be reasonably feasible for a business, because it changes the flavor of the product being consumed through it, and because paper straws start to leak and soften quickly – especially when used by children, who tend to chew on their straws. For a boba tea business, it might appear unreasonable to serve their tea in a regular paper cup instead of the typical plastic cups that are individually sealed with a plastic film and then use a large plastic straw. For a local or national chain, they might claim that it is not reasonably feasible to use special packaging material in San Mateo when they are allowed to use plastics and other non-compostable food service items elsewhere, which would mean that the burden is carried by small local businesses, and larger companies could get around the regulations – who reviews these cases, makes the decisions, and then enforces compliance?

When our facility was open to the public, prior to COVID-19, it was easy for us to educate our customers on what to do with any packaging material or disposable foodservice material they received from us because we were providing the appropriate trash containers labeled with appropriate information. Undoubtedly, one main goal for our community should be to reduce the waste we produce, closely followed by the fact that all waste that is produced needs to be disposed of properly. We would like to suggest that the City of San Mateo considers installing public trash cans with three compartments (trash, recycling, compostables), along with information on said bins on how to sort the waste. These types of trash bins are common place in many cities all over the world, as well as in large public buildings like airports, train stations, court houses, etc., and would help not only improve the rate of recycling and composting trash, but also increase the public's awareness and help educate the consumer.

As you are undoubtedly aware, there are many food businesses in our community that currently use no or almost no compostable disposable food service items (meaning they almost exclusively use plastic products). Will there be support from the City of San Mateo for these (and other) businesses on how to find alternative packaging options? We understand that when San Mateo County adopted the Reusable Bag Ordinance, not much support/education was necessary, because the only product affected was retail bags, so a simple FAQ section was sufficient. Our concern is that the proposed Disposable Food Service Ware Regulations would be far more complex and affect a large variety of products and that much more support is needed for small businesses to help make the right choices.

Lastly, while we completely understand that climate change and pollution are extremely pressing global issues that require our entire community to make sacrifices, we cannot help but ask whether the adoption of these particular regulations is not a bit ill-timed. There is currently no way to know when the global COVID-19 pandemic will end, even with vaccinations being distributed and administered, it is hard to tell when, if ever, the hospitality industry can return to “business as usual”. The economic impact that the pandemic has had on the restaurant industry is devastating. Even those of us who have been able to pivot their business model and remain open are incurring additional costs for setting up parklets/outdoor dining spaces, paying for extra gloves, masks, packaging material for take-out, etc., and this economic impact will continue well past the year 2021. We are certain that you are aware that environmentally friendly packaging options are more expensive than their non-compostable counterparts, not to mention the additional resources that a business would have to spend on educating themselves and their customers, as well as on sourcing those new more expensive items. The question is: Are there any plans being considered on how the City can support businesses in this transition, financially or otherwise?

All this is not to say that we do not support adopting these new regulations, but we would like to make sure that there is adequate support for small businesses and a sound plan on how to enforce these new regulations, so that we as a community can make sure that we are bringing about impactful change and not just making an empty feel-good gesture that turns out to be a (potentially unbearable) burden for some and can be circumvented/ignored by others.

Kind regards,

Anne Moser

BACKHAUS
ARTISAN BREAD AND PASTRIES

Anne Moser | Co-Owner, Head Baker

(650) 808-0360

www.backhausbread.com

From: Stanley Tse < >

Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2021 4:40 PM

To: Clerk <clerk@cityofsanmateo.org>

Subject: Comment : Discuss Disposable Food Service Ware Regulations on January 19th

To who may concern,

When discussing the topic of eliminating plastic dinner ware or container, the first thing we have in mind is whether the replacement is cost-effective, work well with our cuisine, and availability in the market.

Non-plastic dinnerwares and containers cost 5 times higher than plastic.

We have been using plant based fork and spoon since we opened business in 2018. Since we have never offer take away until pandemic start, we were okay offering "premium" compostable fork and spoon on request. However, we switched to plastic because of the need to cut cost. Using the example of the compostable spoon we purchase from Costco at \$37.99 for 1000ct, and plastic spoon at \$7.89 for 1000ct. When comparing the plastic cup and compostable cup, we see there is a 50% higher in price than normal plastic cup at the same size. It's a big different between plastic and compostable item.

Compostable container is not durable and not safe with hot dishes.

The only available container available in the market which is good for hot items is either made with plastic or paper. And there isn't any plant based container that work well with heat. And paper container tend to leak or bent if we don't handle them with extra care.

Although we all know that plastic dinnerware does create waste, but there are limited resource in the market for us to replace with.

Best Regards,

Stanley Tse

Regional Manager of California

Liuyishou Hotpot N.A

Cell:

Best Regards,

Stanley Tse