Why Ithaca Needs to #SkipTheStuff

Every year, billions of straws, utensils, napkins, condiment packets, and other items that customers don’t want or need, are included in take-out and delivery orders. #SkipTheStuff legislation can change this.

While voluntary action by restaurants and delivery companies can be helpful, new restaurants and online ordering apps launch every year without the “accessories upon request” option. #SkipTheStuff is simple, saves restaurants money, and reduces unnecessary waste.

What’s the problem?
Most restaurants provide takeout accessories that customers do not want or need with their to-go meals. These non-recyclable items impact the environment and cost Tompkins County and local restaurants thousands of dollars each year in waste management and litter clean up.

What’s the solution?
The solution is simple. Restaurants need to ask first. Their default action should be to only provide accessories for takeout or delivery if the customer requests them. It’s a solution that saves restaurants money and reduces waste. If you need takeout accessories, you can get them. And if you don’t need them, you can prevent the waste by exercising your right to #SkipTheStuff.

Analysis
Eliminating or reducing the amount of disposable takeout accessories that go to the landfill will help Ithaca meet its Green New Deal emissions targets and save local restaurants thousands of dollars each year in single-use disposable foodware.

Data collected from just five Ithaca based food establishments (extrapolated to the total 289) shows:

- Approximately 54 million single-use foodware accessories will be used in a year, equal to 650 tons of CO2e emissions annually.
- 350 tons of disposable foodware is sent to the landfill each year.
- Tompkins County businesses spend almost $3,000/year each on disposable foodware accessories.
- 486.1 tons CO2e could be saved if only 25%—instead of 100%—of customers received take-out accessories.

Data analyzed by Upstream and Chart-Reuse®.
**Considerations**

Napkins, plastic utensils, straws, and other takeout accessories require the extraction of raw materials. Making and transporting these products uses a great amount of energy and fossil fuels and creates pollution that harms communities.

Takeout accessories are contributing to accelerated global climate change. If all takeout accessories were eliminated in Tompkins County for one year, this would result in an approximately 7.08 ton reduction in CO2e emissions from waste hauling alone.

**Recommendations**

To stem the stream of disposable foodware waste into the environment, slow global climate change, and cut waste hauling and costs to small businesses, it is recommended that Skip the Stuff legislation be passed in Ithaca, NY.

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1 **Assumptions:**
- Data was sourced from 5 Ithaca-based businesses, one from each business category: Ithaca Beer Co, Tacos CDMX, Khmer Angkor, Forty Weight Coffee Roasters, Cup O Jo Cafe
- Skip the stuff would apply to the 289 businesses within Tompkins county. Assumed the total businesses were split evenly by the business categories
- Single-use foodware accessories include: Lid stirrer, sugar packets, creamers, plastic bags, condiment packets, napkins, utensil packets, ramekins, straws, paper bags, utensil packet PLA. Accounted for product packaging of all foodware accessories.
- Assumed number of food accessories through reported amount of daily “takeout customers.”

For more information: info@zerowasteithaca.org