

CASE STUDY: Comforts

**ReThink
Disposable**
STOP WASTE BEFORE IT STARTS

BUSINESS PROFILE

Name:

Comforts

Business Type:

Take-out café

Locations:

San Anselmo, CA

On-site Dining:

36

Take-out:

Yes, 90%

Warewashing:

Yes

Number of Employees:

96

Packaging Practices prior to ReThink Disposable:

- Single-use plastic water cups
- Disposable paper plates
- Plastic utensils
- Default to single-use disposable cups for hot and cold beverages

Recommendations Implemented:

- Reusable drinking glasses for water
- Ceramic plates and bowls
- Stainless steel utensils
- New policy to prioritize ceramic mugs and glassware for dine-in beverages



So appropriately named, Comforts has served *comfort* food to the Marin County area and hometown of San Anselmo since 1986, completing 1,000 daily transactions. Guests can grab any number of freshly prepared deli case foods or an infamous Chinese Chicken Salad, and have the option to enjoy their choice foods at 1 of the 36 seats available for dine-in.

Over the course of seven months, Erin Miwa, co-owner of Comforts, worked with **ReThink Disposable** to update food operations in response to San Anselmo's foodware reduction laws and transitioned from single-use disposables to reusables for their dine-in guests. This move drastically reduced the food packaging waste generated at Comforts, coupled with incredible savings. Erin Miwa also set up a small retail area near the front of the café for customers to stock up on reusable travel foodware for dining on the go.

By implementing ReThink Disposable's recommendations, Comforts eliminated the use of **288,335 pieces** of single-use food packaging, reduced their trash generation by **2.4 tons**, and earned an ongoing net cost savings of nearly **\$14,000**, all on an annual basis.



“When we partnered with ReThink Disposable, it was shocking to discover how much we were contributing to landfill. Switching to reusables not only helps to save us money, but it is gratifying to know that we’re doing our part to minimize waste and help protect our natural resources.” — Erin Miwa, Co-owner

Before: Disposable plates, utensils and water cups.



After: Reusable plates, stainless steel utensils and water glasses.

Results:

Disposable Product Replaced or Minimized*	Recommendation Implemented	Percent Disposable Reduction	Annual Quantity of Single-Use Items Prevented	Payback Period (months)	Annual NET Cost Savings After Payback Period (\$)	Annual Waste Reduction (lbs.)
PLA plastic water cup	Replace with glassware	100%	24,333	0	\$1,837	344
12 oz lined paper hot drink cup	Replace with ceramic mug	33%	12,167	0	\$614	283
16 oz lined paper hot drink cup		50%	24,333	0	\$1,570	808
Hot cup lid 1	Eliminate for dine-in	33%	12,167	0	\$368	118
Hot cup lid 2		100%	1,200	0	\$45	10
Cardboard cup sleeve		50%	7,300	0	\$267	88
16 oz PLA cold cup	Replace with glass	83%	30,417	0	\$5,201	867
PLA cold cup lid	Eliminate for dine-in	50%	18,250	0	\$770	89
9" bagasse plate**	Replace with ceramic plate	+50% (increase)	+6,083 (increase)	0	-\$503 (increase)	-197 (increase)
10" bagasse plate**		0%	0	0	0	0
Plastic fork	Replace with stainless steel	89%	139,917	0	\$3,249	2,099
Plastic spoon		50%	12,167	0	\$283	112
Plastic knife		50%	12,167	0	\$262	183
TOTALS:		AVERAGE % Reduction of targeted foodware: 49%	TOTAL # Reduced: 288,335 pieces	AVERAGE Payback Period: 0 months	TOTAL Net Savings: \$13,963	TOTAL Waste Reduction: 4,804 lbs.

*Some single-use items are still available upon request and generally for catering orders.

**Larger 10" plates are being phased out in favor of the 9" plates, which may account for the increased purchase of 9" plates.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- \$13,963 in total annual net cost savings
- 288,335 disposable items reduced per year
- 4,804 pounds of annual waste reduction

AFTER:
Self-serve area with reusable glassware



ReThink Disposable is a program of Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund conducted in partnership with local businesses and government agencies. Generous support is provided by a changing list of public and private funders. To learn more about the program, its partners, and funders, visit: www.rethinkdisposable.org.



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