

CASE STUDY: The Sacred Wheel



BUSINESS PROFILE

Name: The Sacred Wheel
Business type: Café and Cheese Shop
Location: Oakland, CA
On-site dining: 23 seats
Take Out: Yes
Ware washing: Done by hand by staff

Sacred Wheel is a popular café and cheese shop in the Temescal neighborhood of Oakland. In addition to their well-stocked cheese case, Sacred Wheel offers made-to-order soups, sandwiches, salads, sides, specials and drinks. Sacred Wheel typically serves 70-100 customers per day.

Jena Davidson, Co-owner: *“As our business grew, so did the amount of trash. We were using compostable products, which it turns out are not composted in Oakland and were instead going to the landfill.”*

Packaging Practices prior to Rethink Disposable:

- ➔ All food and beverages were served on disposable food service ware
- ➔ Customers were given disposable utensils and napkins for to-go orders without being asked first
- ➔ Customers were always given a lid and straw for drinks
- ➔ Disposable tasting spoons were used for samples



Jena, the co-owner of Sacred Wheel, had switched to compostable disposable packaging, because she thought this was the best thing to do for the environment. However, she found out that the compostable plastics Sacred Wheel was using to serve food and beverages couldn't be composted in Oakland and were instead being sent to the landfill. Jena reconsidered and realized that real dishes were the best option for Sacred Wheel.

Recommendations Implemented:

- ➔ Replaced disposable tasting spoons, cups, bowls, cutlery and condiment cups with reusable dishware for on-site dining
- ➔ Offered napkins in a self-serve dispenser
- ➔ Made straws available upon request only
- ➔ Ask before giving customers disposable items like utensils and napkins for to-go orders



Jena and her staff implemented all of the **ReThink Disposable** recommendations with great success! Working together, the Sacred Wheel team was able to split up the dish washing responsibilities without adding any extra staff time. This kept costs low and allowed Sacred Wheel to recover the full savings from reduced disposable purchases. In addition to these savings, Sacred Wheel was able to reduce waste hauling costs.



Jena Davidson, Co-owner: “By switching from expensive recyclable and compostable packaging to real dishes, I was able to save money and do the best thing for the environment. And right away customers started commenting on how happy they are with the changes!”



Results:

Recommendation	Products Replaced or Minimized	% Disposable Reduction	Payback Period	Annual Savings (after payback period)	Annual Waste Reduction
Offer napkins in a self-serve dispenser	Paper napkin	16%	2.6 months	\$17	21 lbs.
Offer straws upon request only	Compostable plastic straw	100%	0 days	\$132	15 lbs.
Replace disposable tasting spoons with reusable spoons	Plastic spoon	100%	9 days	\$73	12 lbs.
Replace disposable cups with reusable cups	Compostable plastic and paper cups	86%	27 days	\$644	186 lbs.
Replace disposable bowls with reusable bowls	Compostable bowls	20%	3.2 months	\$130	211 lbs.
Replace disposable cutlery with reusable cutlery	Compostable plastic cutlery	64%	6 days	\$676	100 lbs.
Replace disposable condiment cups with reusable condiment cups	Compostable and plastic condiment cups	57%	27 days	\$266	57 lbs.
Ask before giving out disposable items	Utensils, napkins and lids	N/A	0 days	\$714	N/A
TOTAL				\$2,652	602 lbs.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- \$3,768 total annual savings
- 602 pounds of annual waste reduction
- No additional labor required
- Improved presentation
- Satisfied customers
- Won an award!

ReThink Disposable is a [Clean Water Fund](#) program conducted in partnership with local businesses and government agencies. Generous support for the program 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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