

Celebration Packaging's research finds that despite single-use plastic bans, over half of consumers still expect food-to-go outlets to provide cutlery

3 years ago



A survey by Sapio Research, conducted on behalf of Celebration Packaging, has looked at consumer understanding of the bans on single-use plastic packaging, the alternative materials available and expectations around reusables.

Single-use cutlery bans

Bans on the sale of single-use packaging, including cutlery, are already in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland and will be introduced in England and Wales in October 2023.

“As a long-established packaging supplier and with bans on single-use items such as cutlery either in place or coming soon, we were keen to discover consumer views and the potential impact on food-to-go operators,” says Nick Burton, MD of Celebration Packaging, which is based in Burton Upon Trent, Staffordshire. “Here we look at the provision of cutlery in takeaways and at consumer expectations around reusables.”

Eating out – without single use cutlery

Faced with a ban on single-use plastic cutlery, the survey showed that more than half (53%) of consumers still expect a food outlet or takeaway to provide cutlery for them, while 46% said they were happy to carry their own cutlery for consuming food-on-the-go.

In place of single use plastic cutlery, more than half of consumers would prefer reusable bamboo (54%) or metal (53%) cutlery.

“The fact that more than 50% of people expect cutlery to be provided suggests that there is going to be an ongoing demand for single-use cutlery in some form. So, with the ban on single-use plastic, we need to offer the best recyclable or compostable alternatives, or be able to supply viable reusable options,” says Nick Burton. “Celebration Packaging supplies a range of alternative cutlery options, from wood and bamboo, to moulded fibre (bagasse) and paper.”

Expectations around reusables

When asked: ‘Roughly how many times would you expect to be able to reuse a reusable item, such as cutlery’, half (50%) said they expected reusable items to be able to be used up to 10 times, while over one fifth (23%) expected to be able to reuse an item more than 50 times.

“While people might expect a reuse rate of between x10 to x50, there is currently no agreed definition as to how many times cutlery – or packaging of any type – must be used to justify calling it reusable,” says Nick Burton.

“It is important to deliver on consumer expectations on reusables, and ensure they have the longest possible life. Ever since we launched our EnviroWare® brand, over 14 years ago, we have sought out the most durable and sustainable options.”

Continued demand for single-use solutions

“The survey shows that 53% of consumers expect a food-to-go outlet to provide cutlery, while 51% of consumers never, or rarely use reusable cutlery for eating on the go. It is therefore clear that takeaways are still going to have a requirement for single-use cutlery of some kind, despite the bans,” concluded Nick Burton.

“As a consultative business with many years’ experience in the sector, Celebration Packaging can help outlets choose the most appropriate solutions which best match their business. In our next review of the outcomes of this survey, we will look at material options and the levels of consumer understanding around sustainability and end of life options.”

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