

A CURRENT TRUTH ABOUT BIODEGRADABLE CUTLERY

By Wallace Packaging, LLC - Product Development Department 

Due to recent public concerns about the environment and the interest in going green; we have been receiving some inquiries from a few of our customers about biodegradable cutlery.

Although we continuously examine our options and study current and new technological advances in the field of biodegradable plastic, we looked even harder this time around.

We did not discover anything new. As it has been in the past, prices for the so called biodegradable cutlery and other disposable food service items are still outrageously high. Additionally, there have been very little or no new advances in its biodegradability. Furthermore, we looked at products that are currently available in the marketplace which are supposedly biodegradable. We've found that most have a shelf-life and will decay very quickly – breaking down easily if exposed to moisture or high temperatures. In fact, many are not realistically designed nor are they sturdy enough to use as a utensil. For example, some can break apart in liquid when it is too hot, at temperatures that current plastics have no trouble with. Most importantly pricing for some of these products is 5 times or more than what you are currently paying.

We've found a couple of companies that claim to have developed biodegradable disposable cutlery and food containers that are sturdy and do not have a shelf-life. They claim that their product is water and heat resistant, and it is recyclable yet it is 100% biodegradable which makes no sense. Other than the fact, that these products are 4-5 times higher in price than what you are currently purchasing, their claims can not be substantiated. In reality, the descriptions provided for these so called biodegradable products are unclear and use baseless technical terms. Any one researching the topic can figure out that these descriptions are a play on words and that they are confusing and contradictory. Some products try to confuse you by listing useless certifications and try to spin the definitions of biodegradable, degradable and compostable to their advantage.

Don't be fooled by these products that have not yet proven themselves, or be deceived by these unproven claims from

companies that try to trick you into increasing your budget and to spending a lot more on disposables. They claim to have discovered new and revolutionary breakthroughs; but in fact, most of it is trickery using technical terminology and processes. Most of the product descriptions are conflicting and some even defy the laws of nature. Moreover, biodegradable products are not currently regulated by the government. Who is issuing these certifications? And how verifiable and true are these certifications?

Lastly, our main concern about these so called biodegradable products is by the means in which they decompose. First of all, not all biodegradable products are friendly to the environment. Many are harmful. Secondly, and more importantly, biodegradable products use bacteria or other microorganisms found in the surrounding environment or landfill to decompose and biodegrade. Doesn't this make the so called biodegradable cutlery a magnet for bacteria and other microorganisms? Does this make them unsanitary and unsafe? In fact, the biodegradable plastic industry is not currently regulated by any government agencies; hence the confusion about the safety and usability of these products. We shouldn't be in a hurry to test these unproven/unregulated products on our children.

All we ask of our customers is to research this topic thoroughly before jumping in to the whole idea of biodegradable cutlery. Please do not be fooled by these products and claims that are currently available in the marketplace. We all want to contribute to the effort of saving our environment and preserving our resources. However, spending 5 times more on disposables that might or might not be biodegradable is not the answer. It is not logical to inefficiently use up on resource to conserve another.

To date, recycling remains the safest and most realistic environmental friendly alternative.

- A landfill study conducted by the University of Arizona researchers showed that even biodegradable items did not breakdown and decompose in the land fill like they should have. The researchers uncovered 25 year old hotdogs, corncobs and grapes, as well as 50 year old news papers that are still readable. (Larry West – E/The Environmental Magazine -)
- "...biodegradable plastics require specific conditions to biodegrade properly (micro-organisms, temperature, and humidity), and if not managed properly they may be worse for the environment than conventional plastics. When biodegradable plastics are put into landfill (which should always be avoided in any case) they produce harmful greenhouse gases when breaking down." – FuturEnergia – *Biodegradable plastics: are they better for the environment?*

Please trust in us, Wallace Packaging, LLC, as you have done so to continue to find a logical, economical, and truly environmental solution

Research References

- “*Corn Plastic to the Rescue.*” By Elizabeth Royte. *Smithsonian* magazine, August 2006
- “*Do Biodegradable Items Really Break Down in Landfills?*” By Larry West. *E/The Environmental Magazine*, April 2008
- “*Paper, Plastic, or Something Better?*” By Larry West. *E/The Environmental Magazine*, April 2008
- “*What Does “Biodegradable” Claim Really Guarantee?*” By Larry West. *E/The Environmental Magazine*, April 2008
- “*Biodegradable Plastics: Are they better for the environment?*” *FuturEnergia*, April 2007