

“Greening” the Library Event and Cleanup

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Library staff enjoy a good event involving food as much as any other employee group. Dealing with the inevitable event waste provides opportunities for examining, and potentially changing, engrained practices involving single-use place settings, especially those made of lightweight plastic. “Greening” the library event and cleanup by reducing event waste is one way to act on and practice the library’s commitment to sustainable library operations.

When event planners and event attendees utilize the Party Pack (reusable place settings), they eliminate the purchase and landfilling of popular single-use plastics, including disposable plates, bowls, cups, and cutlery. This is a financial win for the library (or event planners if supplies are purchased with personal funds) by reducing the long-term cost of supplies; this is also a win for environment in that the local landfill does not have to bury additional plastic waste in the ground.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- By building a Party Pack, library staff will connect single-use (disposable) plastic place settings to their negative financial and environmental impacts.
- When event attendees use the Party Pack supplies, they will learn that acceptable, reusable alternatives exist for

single-use (disposable) plastic place settings.

NUMBER SERVED

30–50 people (scalable as needed)

COOKING TIME

1–3 weeks (initially), and occasionally as needed

DIETARY GUIDELINES

This recipe directly addresses all three ingredients of the 3 Rs mantra (reduce, reuse, recycle), used to guide the overarching effort to divert all types of waste from landfills. The word order of the mantra is intentional and hierarchical, with “reduce” being the most impactful action for diverting waste from landfills and “recycle” being the (relatively) least impactful action. The Party Pack reduces event waste at the source; it reuses items already in existence; and, in some cases, it recycles materials no longer fit for use so that they can be made into new, reusable materials.

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- Large but lightweight totes to hold reusable place settings
- 30–50 reusable place settings—main course plates, dessert plates, bowls, cups, cutlery (See Additional Resources for sourcing suggestion.)

- Signage for display at event to indicate that place settings are not disposable
- Phosphate-free dishwashing liquid or dishwasher pods for cleanup
- Instructions (both online and printed) for Party Pack reservation, use, and cleanup

PREPARATION

1. Secure approval and funding to proceed with the Party Pack assembly and ongoing usage.
2. Decide on the number of place settings to assemble (e.g., 30 place settings has worked fine for an 80-employee library as events are usually held at the departmental level).
3. Decide if durable, recycled plastic place settings are appropriate or if durable, non-plastic (but more fragile) place settings are appropriate.
4. Decide on where the Party Pack will be housed. Options may include storing in a staff member’s office or storing with other internal circulating items for staff-only use.

COOKING METHOD

1. Purchase the desired number of place settings and label (e.g., permanent marker) with the library name. See Additional Resources for sourcing sugges-

tion on durable, recycled plastic place settings.

2. Purchase the necessary number of lightweight totes.
3. Purchase phosphate-free dishwashing liquid or dishwasher pods.
4. Create a reservation system for the tote (e.g., online form).
5. Create directions for use, mount these on the tote, and make them available online.
6. Create signage for use at the event to indicate that place settings are not disposable (particularly if they are heavy-duty plastic) and should not be thrown away. You may wish to include a link to the online form where future event planners can reserve the Party Pack (events are often the venue where library staff finally connect messages about the Party Pack with their upcoming work to organize an event).
7. Put all items into the tote and label it as the Party Pack.
8. Announce to library staff the availability of, and encourage use of, the Party Pack via multiple channels (e.g., staff meetings, newsletter, email list).
9. At the beginning of any event where the Party Pack is in use, announce that used place settings should be set in a specific location for post-event washing and repacking.

to watch for, and retrieve, place settings that end up in the trash bin.

Periodically inventory the Party Pack contents and purchase replacement items as necessary, including consumables like dishwashing supplies.

The OSULP Party Pack was 100% inspired by the work of Lauri Richer, known around town and on Facebook as Green Girl (<https://bit.ly/2MqgfUr>). Ms. Richer is a Master Recycler (<https://tinyurl.com/ycz2yfhq>) in Corvallis, Oregon. The OSULP Party Pack has been used 26 documented times since its creation in December 2016 (average documented use is 1.3 times per month).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Preserve Products website, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.preserveproducts.com/>.

Preserve products are made from #5 recycled plastics, thus closing the recycling loop for this type of plastic. Preserve Products accepts returns of broken or damaged Preserve place setting items for recycling into new Preserve products.



Figure. Oregon State University Libraries & Press (OSULP) Party Pack using Preserve Products place settings (photo credit: Uta Hussong-Christian)

CHEF'S NOTES

Event planners using a Party Pack made up of heavy duty plastic items should prepare