

Challenge: How might we encourage waste reduction in Centro using a 3 R's approach?

[Centro](#) is a primary eatery for residence students and campus customers at McMaster University that serves ~4,000 individuals every day. The eatery offers dinnerware and silverware, a [reusable green takeout container program](#), as well as compostable containers and cutlery, and some remaining black plastic from franchises for customers.

From a recent observational study (see Appendix A), in a typical lunchtime period, among those dining in, less than half (36%) opted for a reusable option (dinnerware or a reusable green container), with most opting for a single-use option (compostable or plastic).

While compostable items are better than landfill-destined alternatives, the three R's approach reminds us that 'Reduce' and 'Reuse' come before 'Recycle'. Opting for dinnerware or a reusable green container eliminates emissions associated with the creation, transportation, and composting of compostable items.

Related Resources:

- Hospitality Services – Wellness & Sustainability. McMaster University. Online: <https://hospitality.mcmaster.ca/wellness-sustainability/sustainability/>
- Past Projects. Academic Sustainability Programs Office. Reintroducing the Bring Your Own Mug Program. Online: <https://asp.mcmaster.ca/reintroducing-the-bring-your-own-mug-program/>

Appendix A – Observational Data of Customers in Centro

Observational Data Collection – Hospitality Services - Centro

Date and time: February 6-10, 2023, 11am-2pm

Researcher Dining Experience

Questions:	Researcher 1	Researcher 2	Researcher 3	Researcher 4	Researcher 5
What station did you buy your food from in Centro?	Steeltown	All	Crave	Plantry	Crave
Were you offered options for how your food would be served? YES/NO	No, only asked takeout or dine-in	Paramount: Yes Big Mac: No – only takeout Bamboo – here or to go Crave – dine-in or takeout Simpl: Yes Plantry: dine-in or takeout	No, only asked takeout or dine in	No, only asked takeout or dine in	No, only asked takeout or dine in
If Yes, what options were you offered? GREEN CONTAINER CHINA COMPOSTABLE	Dine in – China		Dine in – China Take out – compostable	Dine in – China Takeout – compostable	China
If you chose China or Green Container, was a discount offered (see receipt)?	No	No *Given plastic cutlery at take out	No	No	No

Customer Observational Data Collection

Receptacle chosen	Tally Customers (1 mark/customer)	Customers Dined In (add a tally mark if they stayed to eat their meal in Centro)
Green Container	Total: 2	
China	Total: 140	
Compostable Container	Total: 230	Total: 99
Paper Bag	12	
Plastic Container	15	