

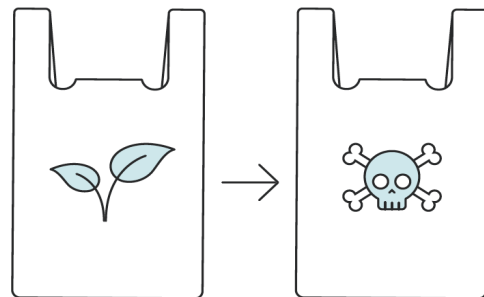


BIOPLASTIC GUIDANCE FOR OCEAN FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

The term “bioplastic” is used to describe a broad range of different types of single-use plastics. While the intent of producers may be to reduce the environmental impact of single-use products, this typically isn’t the outcome. Instead, often misleading compostable and biodegradable claims result in either intentional or unintentional greenwashing. Unfortunately, this type of single-use plastic is not the end-all solution they’re cracked up to be and may be distracting us from real solutions like reuse and refill.



Bioplastics are often marketed as the cleaner alternative to single-use plastics when in reality they are often just as toxic as traditional plastics.

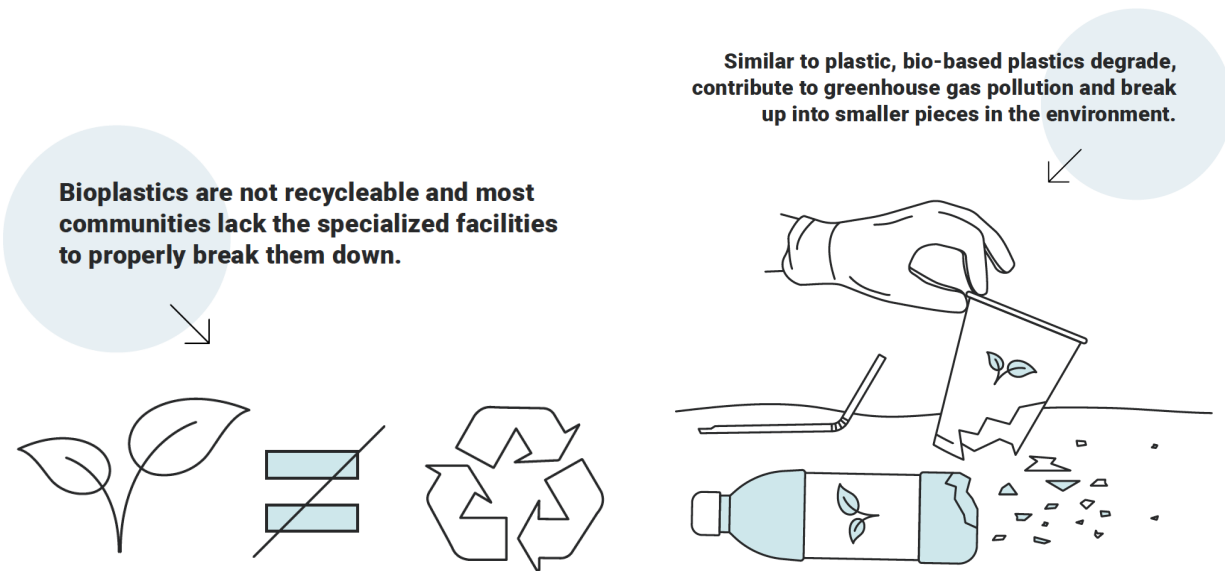


What are bioplastics? The most common associations of bioplastics are plastic items that are made with plant material such as corn, sugarcane, wheat, agave, etc. These are often marked with a green leaf or may say “made from plants.” However, it can include bio-based plastics only partially derived from plant or other renewable materials, traditional petroleum-based plastic products with additives marketed as biodegradable or compostable, or a combination of both.

Are bioplastics cleaner because they’re made from plants? Claims around the environmental benefits of bioplastics are vast, including that they are cleaner and better for the environment because they are plant-based. The reality is that bioplastics are often just as toxic as traditional plastics and can still contain petroleum products or other additives. Despite the lack of scientific evidence to prove these green claims, bioplastics are marketed as a better alternative to traditional single-use plastics, and at a higher cost to consumers. It’s also crucial to consider the entire lifecycle of these products and all end-of-life scenarios to avoid the same pitfalls as petroleum plastics.



But aren't bioplastics composted? Products labeled as compostable are generally not home compostable and instead require specialized facilities to properly break them down. However, the vast majority of communities do not have access to these industrial composting facilities and even fewer [will accept compostable plastics](#). Bioplastics are NOT recyclable either and will often jam equipment, ruining otherwise recyclable material. Bioplastics will most likely end up in landfills or in our environment where the majority of "compostable" plastics will not compost due to improper conditions. This means that these "green" single-use plastics end up behaving the same as traditional plastics. They will degrade, contribute to greenhouse gas pollution and break up into smaller pieces – ultimately adding to microplastic pollution.



So what should I do? Even if you provide compost bins for your customers on-site and send all bioplastics to an industrial composting facility, you cannot control how customers will dispose of the product, especially if they take it to-go. As a restaurant owner, you have the power to help consumers avoid bioplastics and educate them on why these products are not the solution to single-use plastic pollution. Always use reusables where you can - glass and stainless steel are the healthiest options - and try to come up with creative ways to implement reusables for takeout. When you must use single-use, opt for naturally occurring materials such as bamboo, wood, hay, paper, etc. Check out the [Ocean Friendly Foodware Guide](#) for more information on bioplastics, product suggestions and ideas to use more reusable products.