

Consumer Swaps - May 2022

Reusable Straws vs. Plastic

Drawbacks to Plastics Straws

Plastic straws have been under fire in recent years and many restaurants have been providing alternatives to plastics or doing away with them all together. "Seemingly overnight, plastic straws have become environment enemy number one." (NRDC) But why? Why have plastic straws in particular been targeted?

It may be that plastic straws have become a representation of our throwaway culture and are viewed more as more luxury, as they are unnecessary for drink consumption. Additionally, their environmental impact is a real factor. Videos of straws being extracted from the noses of sea turtles and other marine wildlife suffering in the wake of their pollution has given people a sense of urgency and an empathetic pull to action. With 500 million straws used and tossed every day in America, it seems like an easy thing to replace or remove to make a big impact on the environment.

Benefits of Reusable Straws

The largest and most notable benefit to switching to reusable straws or simply going without is the amount of plastic that it saves from landfills. (Simply) Hardly any straws are sorted into recycling bins and then processed in recycling plants, meaning much of debris is left in landfills where the potential of being displaced into the environment is very real.

Carrying a reusable one with you also means never going without a straw on the go. As restaurants go green to improve their optics and resonate with consumer and employee values, less and less plastic straws are going to be available. Getting into the habit of carrying reusable straws now means less frustration later.

Possible Materials

There are a few different materials that straws are made of instead of plastic. Bamboo and glass are popular materials for them to be crafted out of, but both are prone to damage and bamboo can be a chore to clean due to their more porous surface. Instead, you may want to opt for a metal straw when selecting a reusable option. Metal straws are shatter resistant and easy to hand wash with a little soap and their (often included) thin brushes. No matter what material you choose, however, you will be taking an important step towards lessening your footprint and living a more sustainable life.

Works Cited

"Defend Our Environment by Supporting NRDC." NRDC, <https://act.nrdc.org/>

"Simply Eco Store." Simply Eco Store, <https://simplyecostore.com/>

Produced by the Utility Arborist Association Environmental Stewardship Committee and Davey Resource Group:

