



Zero Waste Guide for Vendors 2025

A 2025 Broader Focus on Being Low Impact

We are pleased to be a vibrant, inclusive market that offers delicious and delightful food and community-building interactions to as many people as possible, with everyone – vendors and shoppers alike – finding the market a great experience they want to repeat over and over. We recognize that people are increasingly shopping at farmers' markets to support local farmers and purchase food and products that reduce their environmental footprint. To this end, we have worked hard to become an environmentally sustainable, low-impact market with zero-waste policies and programs.

In 2025, our commitment to zero waste is being incorporated into a more encompassing low-impact approach. This broader approach encompasses environmental issues beyond waste and may include climate, food production and resource extraction. A low-impact market focuses on activities that cause minimal harm to the environment or what is commonly referred to as having a low environmental footprint.

In 2025, as in previous years, we will work hard to reduce waste that is generated at the market and divert as much waste as possible from going to landfill, through sustainable practices such as reducing waste generation, reusing materials and recycling. At the core of this work are the main principles of the zero waste hierarchy: prevent/refuse, reuse, recycle/compost and lastly, dispose.

Our low-impact market is built on the following practices:

- **Waste reduction**, to significantly reduce the amount of waste generated both at the market and when customers get home
- **Diversion**, to divert all the organic waste and recyclable materials discarded at the market away from landfills
- **Closing the Loop**, to promote the use of post-consumer recycled products
- **Education**, to encourage shoppers and vendors to reduce, reuse, and recycle both at the market and beyond

The following pages outline activities we will be taking this year in order to be a low-impact market, and activities we expect you to undertake.

Market Board and Staff Efforts, 2025

We will undertake several activities to support vendors as focus on being a low-impact market:

- Continue the **reusable cup and dishware program**. Since the introduction of our reusable dishware program, we have averted thousands of disposable items from becoming single-use waste.
- Reintroduce our **Eco-Cycle Leader/ Zero Waste Ambassador** volunteer role to help provide more focused support to vendors and the public
- **Expand education** regarding our the importance of reduction and reuse and low impact environmental footprint through fun engagement activities e.g. weekly question – first 5 receive token towards market, a waste diversion barometer, and highlighting waste minimization successes
- **Highlight vendors** on our website and social media channels who have introduced new sustainable packaging and are eliminating or reducing waste
- **Additional resource recovery station** at the other end of the market
- We will **encourage shoppers** to bring their own reusable bags and containers and will continue the “take a bag - leave a bag” boxes

Vendor Efforts, 2025

All vendors are requested to use less packaging overall and reduce single-use packaging materials where possible. We recognize it takes time to select and trial alternatives before committing to new packaging systems (especially ones that may cost more). We also recognize that some products (like raw meats) may still require packaging for health and safety reasons. We would like to cooperatively work with our vendors to find solutions.

Vendor Checklist:

- Reduce packaging and bags, wherever possible
- When packaging is needed, use materials that can be recycled or composted in Toronto's recycling and composting programs
- Take any waste you generate back with you. Vendors must leave the park area as clean as possible, taking any refuse back with them. As part of our permit agreement, the garbage and recycling bins on site are reserved for customers and other park users only.
- Do not use prohibited items. **The following items are prohibited from being used or sold:** disposable water bottles, biodegradable or compostable plastic packaging, disposable paper cups, plastic straws, black plastic and styrofoam

Alternative Packaging

We encourage our vendors to use packaging that can be reused and recycled. Unfortunately, most compostable packaging is not a viable solution in the City of Toronto as the City uses a different

composting system, called anaerobic digestion, that cannot handle biodegradable or compostable plastic packaging. To further complicate the situation, placing biodegradable or compostable plastic containers or bags in the Blue Box or recycling program can potentially result in the plastic load being rejected since these biodegradable plastic products cannot be recycled.

We have identified alternative packaging solutions for vendors.

Item	Lower Impact/Zero Waste Options
Shopping bags	Acceptable materials to give out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Paper bags ◆ Reusable bags and containers ◆ Plastic made from recycled content that can be recycled in Toronto's Blue Box ◆ Ask the shopper if they have brought their own bag and direct them to the market tent to get a reusable bag ◆ Only offer bags to shoppers by request
Produce bags	Acceptable materials to give out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Paper bags ◆ Produce baskets if they can be returned by the customer for reuse or recycled in Toronto's Blue Box program ◆ Encourage shoppers to bring their own produce bags ◆ Vendors must accommodate shoppers that bring their own produce bags or containers. ◆ Plastic produce bags - Only offer to shoppers by request
Takeout containers and food packaging	Acceptable materials to give out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reusable – encourage /ask shoppers to use the reusable dishware provided by the market or bring their own containers ◆ Made from compostable fibre (molded pulp, paper, cardboard, with no wax lining) ◆ Recyclable – make from boxboard, cardboard or molded pulp that can be recycled in Toronto's recycling program ◆ Vendors must accommodate shoppers that bring their own containers

Thank you for supporting our Low Impact, Zero Waste Program