

Washington State Retail Food Code Changes



Hello and welcome to Whatcom County Health Department's Food Safety Program presentation, in which we'll be reviewing some of the main Washington State retail food code changes.

Rule Change: Refilling Reusable Containers



This video will cover the Refilling Reusable Containers rule change that went into effect on March 1, 2022.

Refilling Consumer Owned Containers

- If the container is provided by the consumer, there must be a written plan in place on how to conduct this process safely.



There are instances when a customer may use their own container for refilling foods. Food establishments must submit a plan and obtain approval prior to implementation if interested in allowing consumers to use a consumer-owned container. A written plan must be available onsite upon request.

Refilling Consumer Owned Containers

- Must use visibly clean container
- Refill options:
 - Non Ready-to-Eat, bulk & packaged food
 - Ready-to-eat food dispensed from equipment
 - Request an employee to refill container



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In order to refill their own container, the consumer must use a container that is visibly clean. The consumer has options to refill their container with non ready-to-eat food, bulk food and packaged food. They can also refill their container with ready-to-eat food when dispensed from equipment, such as a gravity flow unit. Examples of this are granola, honey, spices, etc. If a consumer wants to refill their container with unpackaged, ready-to-eat food in open containers (like in a deli counter or salad bar) they must request that a food employee does the refilling for them.

Container Types

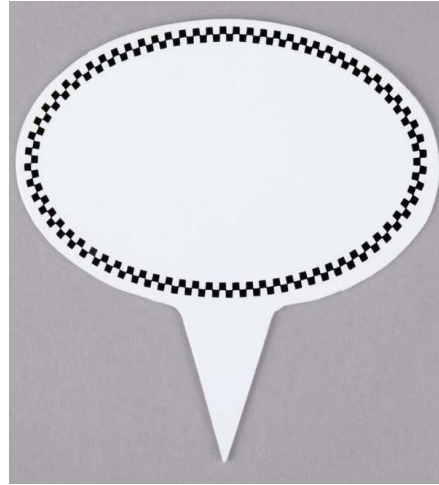
- Single-use items
- Multi-use items (plastic, stainless steel, etc.)
- Glass



They types of customer-owned containers that can be used include single-use items, multi-use items such as plastic, stainless steel or other containers designed to be washed repeatedly and glass. If using glass, make sure to include a clean-up kit in your establishment for broken glass and staff are trained on how to deal with broken glass in the food area.

Consumer Education

- Inform consumers about proper refilling methods:
 - Container types
 - Cleanliness
 - Types of foods



Use signage, stickers or other printed material to inform consumers about proper ways to refill containers. This should include information about container types customers can use, the need for containers to be clean, and the types of foods that can be filled.

Refilling Without a Written Plan

- Water vending station
- Consumer-owned beverage container



There are some refilling options that do not require a written plan. For example, any consumer-owner container can be refilled at a water vending station. Consumer owned beverage containers can also be refilled if they are refilled with a drink for the owner, can be easily cleaned, can be rinsed with fresh, hot-running water at the food establishment, and a dispensing system is used that prevents contamination, like a fountain drink machine.

Refilling Without a Written Plan

Take-home containers must be:

- Initially provided by the food establishment
- Washed, rinsed and sanitized prior to reuse



Another option is refilling a take-home food container that was initially provided by the food establishment. It may be returned to the food establishment and washed, rinsed and sanitized by the establishment prior to reuse. These containers should be designed for repeated use and can be refilled with any food.

Resources

- DOH toolkit available at the WCHD website:

AMC Toolkit: Refilling of Consumer-owned Containers

Exempt for situations listed in Section 2, retail food establishments may refill consumer-owned containers without a written approval when required by AMC 280-220-03000. Note: It is the responsibility of the consumer to fill a personal container with their own food from their individual meal service (such as a buffet table) or their plate.

SECTION 1: ESTABLISHMENT INFORMATION				
Food Establishment				
ESTABLISHMENT NAME				
STREET (PHYSICAL ADDRESS)				
CITY	STATE	ZIP	EMAIL	
CONTACT NAME				
TITLE / POSITION				
SECTION 2: REFILL AND CONSUMER-OWNED CONTAINERS REQUIREMENTS (APPROVED BY ALC)				
*Complete Section 4 for each option checked.				
SECTION 2: REFILLS MUST FOLLOW GUIDELINES BUT THEY DO NOT REQUIRE SEPARATE APPROVAL BY ALC				
Check each additional process used in your facility.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Option 1: Nonready-to-eat or packaged food? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nonready-to-eat bulk foods (such as dry rice, uncooked pasta, uncooked beans)• Nonready-to-eat produce (such as whole, unpeeled fruits and vegetables)• Packaged or repackaged food (such as bagged salad mix)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Option 2: Ready-to-eat food in protective dispensers? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unpackaged, ready-to-eat foods (such as granola, honey, spices)• Dispensed through a gravity flow or other chute-delivery system that protects the bulk food supply from accidental contamination.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Option 3: Ready-to-eat food in open containers? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unpackaged, ready-to-eat foods in open containers (such as deli counters, salad bars, bulk food bins with lids)• Only food workers may refill consumer-owned containers with ready-to-eat, unpackaged food not in dispensers.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Container for refilling by food processing plant <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collection unit and area for empty containers may not attract pests or cause a nuisance.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Container refilled at water-washing station <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any consumer-owned container may be refilled by the consumer at a water-washing station.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer-owned beverage container <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Container is only refilled with a drink for the owner.• Container is designed to be easily cleaned.• Container can be rinsed with fresh, running hot water at the food establishment.• Container is refilled by an employee or the container's owner if using a dispensing system that prevents contamination, such as a fountain drink machine.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Container provided by the food establishment for refilling and washed by the food establishment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Containers must be designed for repeated use (not single-use disposables).• Containers must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized at the food establishment before refilling.• Containers may be refilled with any food.				
SECTION 4: APPLICATION USING CHECKLIST				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For establishments opting to allow self-service based on Section 2 above, the following must be submitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consumer Education: Food establishments must educate consumers on approved options for refilling. Ensure consumer education includes the types of containers they may refill, the need for containers to be cleaned, the types of foods that can be filled, how to notify a worker if risks are observed, and any other facility-specific requirements. Provide copies of educational materials to be used, such as signage, stickers, or other printed material.				
Containers Allowed: Indicate the types of containers that can be refilled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Single-use items: Inform customers if clean, single-use containers (such as reusable zipper bags) may be used.<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple-use items: Plastic, stainless steel, or similar food containers that are designed to be washed repeatedly.<input type="checkbox"/> Glass: Include clean up kit for broken glass and training for staff for food discard if glass is broken in the food area.<input type="checkbox"/> Other:				

AMC Toolkit: Refilling of Consumer-owned Containers

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<https://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/867/Food-Safety>



The Washington Department of Health created a toolkit establishments can use to guide them through refilling of consumer-owned containers. This resource is available on our food safety webpage.



Thanks for Watching!

Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department

