

How to Make a Flat White Sustainable Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre Darren Tait, Director of Culinary Services

Overview

Since initial planning for Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre began, our team has been committed to leading the industry in world-class sustainable operations.

Coffee is a way of life in New Zealand, but in 2019, it was estimated that Kiwis used 295 million single-use coffee cups⁽¹⁾, and 97 million plastic milk bottles go to landfills each year⁽²⁾. Here's how we're playing our part to make a positive difference, one small step at a time.

Opportunity

Hot on the heels of winning the 2023 Skål International Sustainable Tourism Award (Community and Government Projects category), in February 2024 we achieved Toitū net carbon zero certification, meeting internationally recognised standards of measuring, managing and reducing lifecycles emissions from our operations.

The joy of coffee in our business cannot be underestimated - it plays a crucial role in enhancing a delegate's experience. However, during our first two years of operations, we realised the significant environmental impact of using 115,000 single-use coffee cups and 87,000 lids. Unfortunately, Christchurch currently doesn't have the facilities to recycle these items, so every cup ended up in landfill, each with a carbon footprint of 60.9 grams of CO₂e⁽³⁾.

Additionally, during this period, we used 21,000 two-litre plastic milk bottles for our coffee service. While these bottles are recycled, they are sent offshore for processing, which further contributes to our environmental footprint. We knew we had a responsibility to make a positive change.

Actions

Step 1: Reusable Coffee Cups

Our first step was to find a sustainable alternative to single-use coffee cups. After extensive research, we chose Huskee Cups - cups made from coffee bean husks, a by-product of coffee production that is traditionally left to decompose slowly on the ground. Using these cups allowed us to reduce waste and support a circular economy.

Step 2: Reducing Milk Bottle Waste

Next, we tackled our milk bottle usage. We partnered with Spout Milk⁽⁵⁾, a small local company that supplies milk in 10-litre metal kegs, eliminating five plastic bottles from the waste cycle for every keg. The milk is produced just 45 kilometres from Te Pae

Christchurch in Darfield, further minimising our environmental impact by reducing transportation emissions.

Step 3: Sustainable Coffee Bean Packaging

We also wanted to address the waste generated by our coffee bean packaging. With nearly one tonne of coffee beans being used, traditionally supplied in 1kg bags, this was another area where we could make a difference. Working with our local coffee supplier, we developed a solution where our coffee beans can be delivered in 8kg buckets, which are collected, cleaned, and refilled with each new order.

Results

Since the launch of these initiatives in late 2023, we have made significant strides in reducing our environmental impact in our coffee service, including:

- Reduction in the use of single-use coffee cups and lids by 53%
- Elimination of 3,780 two-litre plastic milk bottles from our waste stream
- Removal of 3,232 single-use coffee bags from the waste cycle

These simple initiatives have had a significant impact on our business. We've reduced our carbon emissions by diverting waste from landfills and offshore processing, lowered our operating costs through the decreased use of disposable items, and improved client satisfaction as they learn about what we are doing to reduce our carbon footprint.

References

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- (3) Erskine, R., & Erskine, R. (2023, August 9). *New study shows recyclable coffee cups can reduce carbon footprint and save water - here's how*. Scotsman Food and Drink. <https://foodanddrink.scotsman.com/drink/new-study-shows-recyclable-coffee-cups-can-reduce-carbon-footprint-and-save-water-heres-how/>
- (4) Huskee - Reusable coffee cups. (n.d.). <https://huskee.co/>
- (5) Spout milk. (n.d.). Spout Milk. <https://spout.co.nz/>



Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre – certified Toitū net carbonzero



Te Pae Christchurch - Making coffee using Spout milk, in re-usable cups