

Fast Food Wasteland: McDonalds

1-3. Packaging

- Burgers/sandwiches/wraps are packaged using thin wrapping paper, and McRib and other premium sandwiches are packaged in cardboard boxes. 1 layer.
- Salad bowls are made in plastic bowls with a clear plastic lid. 1 layer.
- Breakfast plates are packaged with similar packaging to the salad bowl, but as a plate. 1 layer.
- Fries are packaged in small cardboard boxes/cartons. 1 layer.
- Condiments are packaged in small plastic cups with foil tape that covers the cup, preventing spillage. The individual peels off this cover to access the condiment. 1 layer.
- Drinks, Parfaits, and McFlurries are poured into thick paper cups (milk is packaged in plastic bottles), and are covered by thin plastic lids. Plastic straws and thick plastic spoons are used. 1 layer.
- Chicken McNuggets are packaged in paper boxes similar to premium sandwich packaging. 1 layer.
- Happy Meals are consisted of (but not limited to) an entrée, fries, apples, and a small drink, which are all packaged together in a paper bag. Drive-thru orders are also packaged in the same way, but with varying items. 2 layers.
- Utensils are only provided in the event that the customer orders a plated or cupped food item, such as the big breakfast platter, fruit parfait, or McFlurry. Utensils are generic plastic spoons and knives. Straws are packaged in thin paper wrappers. 1 layer.
- Napkins are openly available, but utensils and condiments must be asked for or provided by the restaurant upon ordering an item that calls for either one.
- Each tray has 1 sheet of paper on it with ads and information. 1 layer.

4. Trash Container

- I observed 9 people dispose of their trash into the trash receptacle in 30 minutes.
- Most of the disposed waste was paper containers used for burgers, McNuggets, fries, and bags.
- Drink cups were the least often to be disposed due to their reusability to the consumer.
- Food waste and full condiment packages were disposed of often, especially from juvenile customers.
- Unused napkins were barely disposed of; they were often left at the table.
- Full drinks were rarely dumped.

5. Total Customers/Day

- $18 \times 15 = 270$
- $270 \times 4 = 1080$
- $1080 \times 2 = 2160$

6. Average Waste/Per Customer

- I estimate that the average customer throws away:
 - 2 paper wrappers x **2160** = **4320**
 - 1 fry carton x **2160** = **2160**
 - 4 napkins x **2160** = **8640**
 - 1 tray paper sheet x **2160** = **2160**
 - 2 condiment packets x **2160** = **4320**
 - 1 nugget box x **2160** = **2160**
 - 1 cup x **2160** = **2160**

7. Recycling Containers

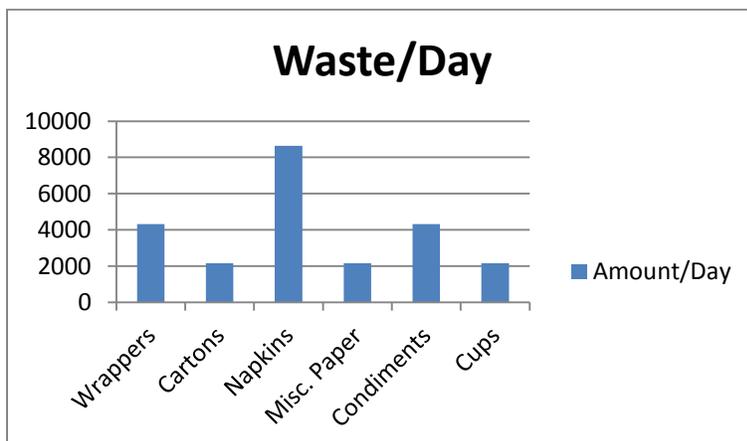
- Recycling containers are not provided in the restaurant.

8. Summary, Table

McDonalds Serra Mesa

12/12/14, 3:40 pm

I found that McDonald's majority of waste is consisted of paper, with plastic being a close second. Most waste from the restaurant is from wrappers and boxes that contain the main food items, such as burgers, sandwiches, wraps, fries, and nuggets. Napkins and condiments are also high on the disposal list.



Waste can be reduced in fast food restaurants by switching to using reusable packaging and serving, such as switching to reusable plates, glasses, and cups for condiments. To achieve this goal without hurting business, the government should issue a law or policy that encourages establishments to shift to reusable products, such as imposing a tax on how much waste is allowed to be thrown away. The government can also shift subsidies to producing and offering recyclable materials, to promote use in establishments.

Recycling bins can also be issued to restaurants, so paper and plastic can be recycled to produce more containers, boxes, and napkins, and less waste will be present in landfills. Since all plastics used in McDonald's are most likely the same, recycling plastic will be easy, and paper recycling will be even easier, if unwanted particles are filtered out in the recycling process. Food, drink, and condiment waste will obviously be disposed of in landfills.

Since there aren't many non-recyclable items, plastic alternatives can be produced that are able to be composted. Paper that isn't treated with harmful chemicals in the process of manufacturing can be composted, if the company shifts to manufacturing these types of paper products.

Most importantly, food waste should not be an issue at all. Order less!