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What goes around comes around – stainless steel for a greener world

Single use plastic is undeniably a blight on our planet while reusable, recyclable stainless steel food and drink containers offer the best possible alternative – here are the powerful and compelling reasons why.

Reuse me, reuse me, reuse me

Stainless steel containers can be reused hundreds of times by employing a simple cleaning after each use and – being created in an almost indestructible alloy – they can take extremely high temperatures as part of that process.

Drop me

Food and drink containers from the less-in-tune past would often break causing mess, or danger (if glass) and of course the loss of the actual commodity in them.

In terms of strength alone, stainless steel is in a class of its own – drop it once, drop it a hundred times and your contents will still be intact and your stainless steel container will live to see another thousand days. Being lightweight, it is also less likely to get dropped in the first place.

Recycle me

The big picture – architecture looks at cradle to grave use of onsite materials (with stainless steel a star in this area, too) and we can apply that ethos to stainless steel containers as well.

When they have finally seen their last day (year, decade) they are 100% recyclable for any manner of uses. Stainless steel has a famously low-emission footprint.

Be seen with me

Stainless steel containers are easily decorated – whether for marketing or fashion or both – using sustainable labelling, dyes, baked coatings etc.

And this is a biggie – change is about working with people's needs, not confronting those needs.

A fashionable drinks bottle is also a saleable one.

Protect with me

Letting the sun shine in is not a big bonus when it comes to food and beverages, milk as prime example. Unlike glass and without the use of dreaded plastic, stainless steel blocks the sun and enhances the life of your foodstuff.

In fact, stay pure with me

Stainless steel is an inert material so imparts no flavour to food or drinks.



Leading by great example



Synlait, a dairy company headquartered in the South Island, has recently introduced a swappable milk bottle that is safe, refillable, non-corrosive and recyclable – it is made from food-grade stainless steel (type 304) which is widely used in dairy factories throughout New Zealand. At this stage, this stainless steel bottle is only available at selected South Island locations.

Ticking the above boxes, the stainless steel "Swappa Bottle" is easy to clean and sterilise, and is also light-proof which helps with the longevity of the milk it contains.

And because stainless steel is robust and long lasting it contributes to the company's zero-waste policy, including ensuring a dramatic reduction in the amount of plastics used.

The stainless steel milk bottles can be swapped at local supermarkets during a regular grocery shop.

The good news for the planet and for our industry

The really good news is that when things start to change they can change fast – thirty years ago bought takeaway lunches came in waxy bleached-white bags, now they're handed over in recycled brown bags which are rough, earthy, and reassuring to the touch.

Similarly, the wall-to-wall plastification of our planet has had to turn and turn fast – enter the appealing and wholly sustainable alternative of stainless steel reusable/recyclable food and drink containers.



Driving factors

Two drivers will speed stainless steel to be an even bigger hero in our battle for a greener, longer-lasting Earth.

The first one is that no matter what role we play along the stainless steel production line, it's key to look at the big picture over any marginal budget gains or loses, these will adjust over time – and this is attendant to the second point.

Second, what our industry needs is for government legislation to step in, too. Stainless steel could/should be an obligatory first choice when it comes to new beverage/food production changes.

Look at it this way, the person selling double glazing must have been quick to pop the champers when double glazing became de rigour for new home builds.

Lastly, there's only one way – forwards

Stainless steel is already used extensively in the food/beverage industries – but given the world's precarious situation and people's fast growing awareness, its role in these arenas is set to go from strength to strength. After all, there really is no way back.