



Composting the Compostables

- It's not that easy!

Composting the compostables sounds easy enough, the "quick fix" when it comes to dealing with the thousands of pounds of take out PLA "compostable" containers, cups and utensils that are used once and discarded in the recycling bin everyday.

So what's the big deal? I'm doing "my duty" - I'm recycling! Well there are a couple reasons this does not work. Let's explain;

1. If these containers contain any PLA (Polylactic Acid), the chemical conversion of plants (not petroleum) into containers, cups and utensils, gives it identical plastic like properties! Even if products are coated in PLA or have any plasticizers, hardeners or additives of any kind, again!...You got Plastic!
2. These "compostables may say they are compliant with ASTM 6400 or ASTM 6868, which means it will not compost well at a home compost pile. These require an industrial composting facility using heat (140F) and oxygen to facilitate the composting process, which takes about 3 months. If the products are not composted under these conditions, they will likely persist in the environment for decades, or longer. It could be up to 1,000 years in a landfill or in the water leaving behind their chemical residue! (Don't discount the health ramifications associated with these chemicals, they may affect hormone metabolism/regulation if they leach into your food or beverage from the container you are using!)
3. The BIG PROBLEM? Our area, nor anywhere nearby, has an industrial composting facility! There is no way to collect and separate these items. So while you think you are "composting", think again! You are simply filling up the landfill or our waterways with plastic!



So what's the solution? Here are a couple:

1. Avoid containers that say "recyclable" or are PLA designated.
2. Look for biodegradable and are 100% plant based . "Mother Nature" will take care of these without heat and water...just natural microbes...turning into dirt. These 100% plant based products are not toxic to marine life.
3. Aluminum foil is an option. Aluminum is recyclable...request that instead of plastic.
4. Better yet, next time you order out, bring your own container and if necessary your own utensils and cups!

Bon appetit...plastic free!