

Plastic Food Packaging Reduction at Mein Bowl and The Rig



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Overview

In an effort to reduce plastic container usage at the refinery, the usage was observed, and based on the findings, staff procedures and packaging material were changed for the purpose of the study, in hopes that these practices could continue.

Understanding the problems

Ocean plastics and
bioaccumulation



Incorrect recycling
—> strain on landfills



Economic
sustainability



Objectives

- Reduce plastic generation/waste
- Improve Sustainability
- Become more cost efficient
- Educate
- Encourage and support change

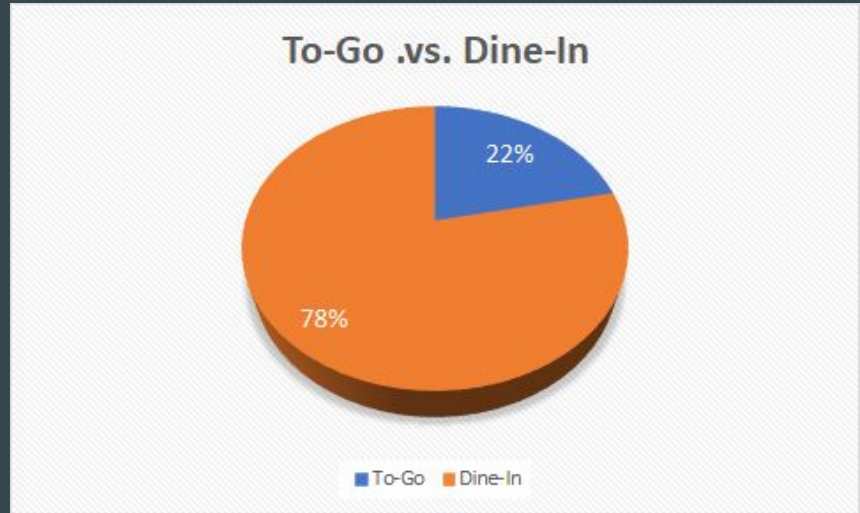
Methodology:

- Study food packaging use
- Hypothesis
- Baseline studies: Field observation of consumer behavior
- Designing the trial
- Implementing the trial and observe changes

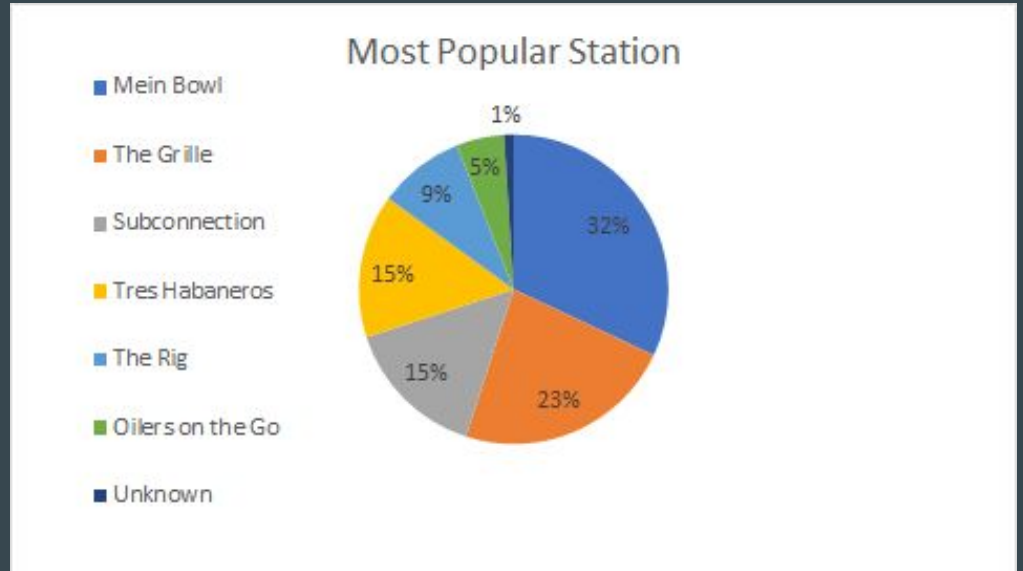


Baseline Findings:

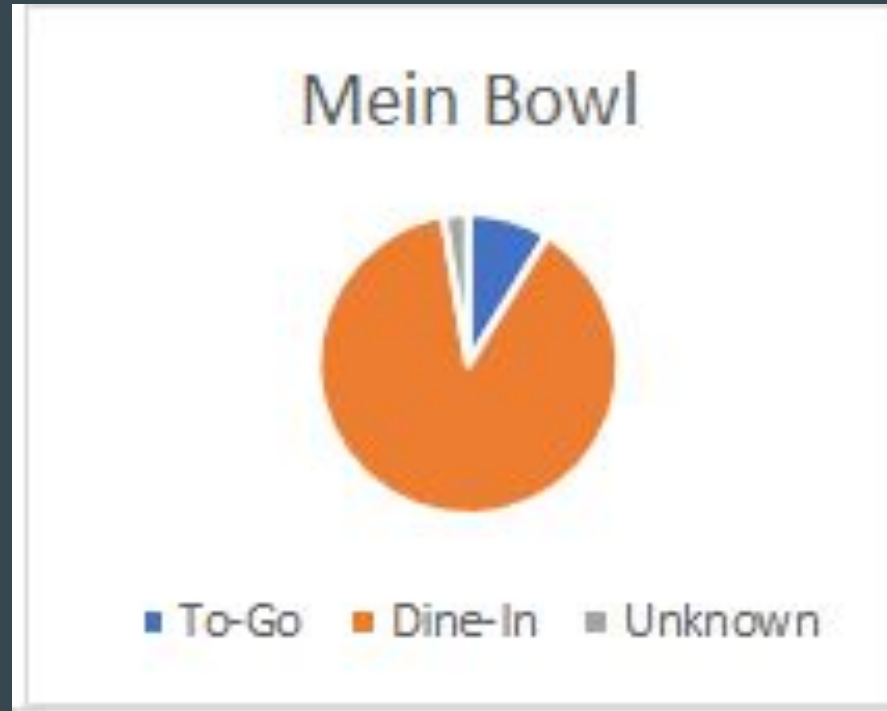
Dine In > **To-go**



Baseline Findings:
Mein Bowl is the
most popular



Baseline Findings: Dine in vs. To-go at Mein Bowl



**Baseline Finding:
The Rig uses 7360
pc/yr unrecyclable
containers**



Proposed Changes

Mein Bowl

- Give lids only upon customer request



Proposed Changes

The Rig

- Substitute non-recyclable packaging with compostable
- Provide sauce only when customers ask, saving portion cup use.

In our effort to reduce plastic waste at The Rig, **SOUR CREAM** will **ONLY** be given upon request for the Loaded Ring Wings and Loaded Ring Fries. Additionally, please inform the cashier if you do not want **RANCH** or **MARINARA** with your Mozzarella Sticks or Fried Pickles.



Thank you.



Plastic Waste Reduction

- Mein Bowl Lid reduction of **69.9%**, equal to **11,200** pieces of plastic per year
- Compostable products at The Rig will save **7360** pieces of plastic from landfills per year

Waste Reduction: Pounds Saved from Landfill

- Mein Bowl:

117.8 lbs/year

- The Rig:

99.9 lbs/year

*These were both based on a 32 week year because that is the approximate amount of time school is in session.

Cost Savings

Mein Bowl

- \$3920 / year

The Rig

- \$77 in savings

Total Savings \$3997

The cost savings differ greatly because Mein Bowl removed one plastic product by approx. 70%, while The Rig substituted current product with a similar price alternative.

Project Outcomes

Plastic Waste Reduction

- Less lids used at Mein Bowl → less lids going to landfill
- Possibility of fewer portion cups given out at The Rig
- No more plastic food packaging waste from The Rig
 - Exception: portion cup lids

Cost Savings

- Cheaper to use compostable packaging than previous plastic packaging at The Rig
- Reduced lid use at Mein Bowl → reduced cost
- \$3997 saved per year

Simpler Waste Disposal

- All compostable packaging has the same disposal outlet
 - Customers don't have to wonder what material gets disposed where
- Less education necessary

Trial Expansion

- Changes can continue at Mein Bowl and The Rig
- Change in procedures and packaging can be implemented throughout the Refinery

Project Limitations

School shutdown
due to COVID-19

- Resulted in only a one-week trial

Customer feedback

- Dissatisfaction could inhibit permanent changes

Customer behavior

- Many customers don't properly dispose waste, limiting choice of sustainable alternatives.

Private restaurant
ownership makes
change difficult

- Savings only for that restaurant, not UF
- Coordination between multiple parties

Recommendations for Further Research at The Rig

- Project limitation: observers weren't close enough to The Rig
- Challenging to track the changes made this time
- In the future:
 - Be physically closer to restaurant during observations
 - Hear/see what people order
 - Compare data between observations and Dining Services

Future Steps: Mein Bowl and The Rig

1. Trial to permanent in Mein Bowl and The Rig
2. Mein Bowl becomes example for The Refinery
3. Identify other plastic waste in these restaurants

Future Steps: UF Campus

1. Continuation of waste reduction in The Refinery
2. Switch to all compostable and/or recyclable packaging in Refinery
3. Expansion to Henderson Dining Hall
4. Anaerobic digester