

REUSABLE MUGS IN THE HRM DURING COVID-19

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TABLE of CONTENTS

List of Acronyms.....	3
Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction	3
Project Summary	5
Methodology.....	5
Findings	5
Recommendations	9
For customers	9
For businesses.....	10
Conclusion.....	10
Acknowledgements.....	10
References	11
Appendices.....	12
Appendix A - Coffee Shop Contact Spreadsheet	12
Appendix B - Supporting Information for Businesses.....	14
Appendix C- Reusable Mug Mythbusting Infographic.....	15
Appendix D – Social Media Graphic of Locations accepting Reusable Mugs.....	17
Appendix E – One Page Summary of “Reusable Mugs in The HRM During Covid-19”.....	18

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COVID-19: Coronavirus

HRM: Halifax Regional Municipality

STIN: Stop Trashing It Network

SUPs: Single-use plastics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report compiled a list of coffeeshops that accept reusable mugs in the HRM during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused many behavioral changes around single-use plastics and waste production (Giansante and Goodman, 2020), where this project aims to provide businesses and individuals with resources to respond to these changes, particularly around single-use cups. Coffeeshops in the HRM were contacted via phone calls or in-person to inquire about their reusable mug policies. This report will help HRM citizens know what to expect when visiting local establishments and provides information to make informed decisions on which coffeeshops to visit for take-out coffee. Additional insight has been provided to improve existing policies to reduce waste, and recommendations for businesses and customers alike.

INTRODUCTION

While the COVID-19 pandemic is an immediate crisis, plastic pollution is thought to have long term consequences to public health as well. The UN declared plastic pollution to be an international crisis in 2017 (Vanapalli, et. al., 2020). Furthermore, it is now known that COVID-19 is transmitted through aerosol particles and is the only documented mode of transmission of COVID-19 (*Health Expert Statement Addressing Safety of Reusables and COVID-19*). It is possible that these particles can be transmitted through surfaces as well, however, evidence suggests that aerosol particles survive longer on plastic surfaces than they do on cloth or paper. It is also known that cleaning agents are effective in breaking down the lipid barriers of the particles, rendering them noncommunicable (Ahvan, 2020).



Evidence suggests minimal difference between disposable coffee cups and washed reusable mugs in terms of safety. It is, however, known that SUPs are unsafe for many reasons other than viral transmission. They cause environmental harm and have the potential to cause public health crises in the future through pollution, notably through air pollution (Vanapalli, et. al., 2020). With international efforts to ban SUPs on the rise before COVID-19, there is a concern that even the temporary repeal of such bans could lead to permanent behavioral change in consumer preferences (Giansante and Goodman, 2020). The seemingly unanimous decision by various policymakers to return to SUPs could cause people to associate SUPs with hygiene and safety. In truth, this connection would be tenuous:

“The premature withdrawal of SUP reduction policies (mainly plastic bags) was contested as many consumers have already adjusted to using non-plastic alternatives motivated by these policies (Xanthos and Walker, 2017) and the contribution of reusable grocery bags in the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 remained questionable, especially when coupled with proper hygiene practices, such as regular hand washing and frequent laundering of reusable bags” (Silva, et. al., 2020).

Policymakers felt it was prudent to repeal SUP bans in light of the public health crisis. While the evidence suggests that SUPs do not effectively protect from virus transmission, there is evidence to suggest that plastic pollution will cause more public health crises in the future. “The amount of waste generated due to COVID-19 indeed threatens the existing waste management streams, meaning that plastic leakage/pollution may impose severe risks to both environmental and human health.” (Vanapalli, et. Al., 2020). By delaying or repealing SUP bans, policymakers are risking more public health crises in the future.



PROJECT SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many coffeeshops in the HRM stopped accepting reusable mugs either temporarily or permanently, leaving consumers unsure of where they can reliably use reusable mugs for takeout coffee. Given this potentially harmful situation, Stop Trashing It Network (STIN) developed a project to address both business and consumer attitudes to reusable mugs.

The project goal was to identify which coffee shops accept reusable mugs for takeout drinks in the HRM, specifically in Metro Halifax and Dartmouth, and spread awareness among our network. The research objective was to compile a list of locations at which patrons can use reusable mugs to purchase takeout coffee, and under which policies these locations will accept reusable containers.

METHODOLOGY

A list of coffee shops in Metro Halifax and Dartmouth was compiled based on community knowledge and conducting desktop research using a Google as the search engine. Contact information of 50 coffeeshops was compiled in a spreadsheet, where 41 were contacted between January and March 2021 (Appendix A). Locations were contacted via phone call and email, where the research disclosed their identity and affiliation, and the purpose of the call. All coffee shops were asked if they accepted reusable mugs at their business. If they did, further questions were asked about their policies, if any, in accepting reusable mugs. If they did not accept reusable mugs, businesses were asked if they would like to receive additional information in the form of a support document (Appendix B) and myth busting infographic (Appendix C).

FINDINGS

Of the 50 businesses contacted by STIN, 25 accept reusable mugs under three main policies: Keep lid and/or wipe down mug, pour drink into your own mug, and accept clean mug as is (Table 1; Appendix A).



Table 1. List of businesses in Metro Halifax and Dartmouth contacted by STIN for this project, broken down by their policies.

Keep lid and/or wipe down mug	Pour drink into your own mug	Accepts clean mugs as is
Cabin Coffee	Little Eden The Earth Friendly Cafe and Bakery	Alteregos
Café Lara	Lucky Penny Coffee Co.	Bird's Nest Cafe & Catering
Cafe Taiyaki 52	Humani-T Cafe	Cafe Aroma Latino
Cempoal Calavera Negra Cafe	Piece of Cake Bakery and Cafe	Coburg Social Bar and Cafe
Dilly Dally Coffee Cafe		Espresso 46
Grounded Coffee Bar		Hold Fast Cafe
New Scotland Yard		Rabbit Hole Cafe
Selby's Bunker Coffee & Gifts		Tart & Soul Cafe
Sine Coffee Labs		The Ville Caffeine Bar
		Trident Booksellers & Cafe
		Uncommon Grounds
		Wired Monk

Some businesses that self-identified as accepting reusable mugs followed the protocol of brewing drinks in disposable cups and asking customers to pour their beverage from the disposable cup into their own reusable mug. These establishments were not included, as this practice does not eliminate waste. This practice could be modified by brewing the drink in a washable vessel and washing between customers, which is a policy that some coffee shops are already using in the HRM.

While writing this report, [The Tare Shop](#) compiled a crowd-sourced list of coffee shops which accept reusable mugs, which has been cross referenced with STIN's findings. Some of the locations which had previously said they do not accept reusable mugs are now on



The Tare Shop's list. It is unclear what influenced these changes and following up on that would be helpful in understanding how to influence behavior change in our community. Between STIN and The Tare Shop, 35 coffee shops in the HRM accept reusable mugs. (Table 2).

Table 2. List of coffee shops accepting reusable mugs in the Halifax Metro and Dartmouth and their locations as of April 2021. Businesses identified by the Tare Shop are noted with an asterisk.

Coffee Shop	Address
Alteregos	2193 Gottingen St
Bird's Nest Cafe & Catering	1547 Barrington St
Boyd's Pharmasave*	2525 Agricola St
Cabin Coffee	1554 Hollis St
Cafe Aroma Latino	5780 North St
CAFE LARA	2347 Agricola St
Cafe Taiyaki 52	2009 Brunswick St
Cempoal Calavera Negra Cafe	2374 Agricola St
Coburg Social Bar and Cafe	6085 Coburg Rd
Coffeeology *	1587 Dresden Row
Dilly Dally Coffee Cafe	6100 Quinpool Rd
Dinah's Sourdough*	3540 Novalea Dr
Espresso 46	2867 Isleville St
Grounded Coffee Bar	1869 Upper Water St
Hold Fast Cafe	5520 Almon St
Humani-T Cafe	5755 Young St
Little Eden The Earth Friendly Cafe and Bakery	1996 Brunswick St
Local Jo*	2959 Oxford St
Lucky Penny Coffee Co.	6440 Quinpool Rd



New Scotland Yard	45 Portland St
Piece of Cake Bakery and Cafe	1475 Lower Water St
Rabbit Hole Cafe	1452 Dresden Row
Selby's Bunker Coffee & Gifts	1090 Cole Harbour Rd
Sine Coffee Labs	1505 Barrington St
Tart & Soul Cafe	6389 Coburg Rd
The Fourth Pull*	5687 West St
The Nook*	2118 Gottingen St
The Osney*	5783 Charles St
The Tare Shop*	5539 Cornwallis St
The Tare Shop*	21 Portland St
The Ville Caffeine Bar	5146 Sackville St
Trident Booksellers & Cafe	1256 Hollis St
Uncommon Grounds	1030 South Park St
Uprooted Market and Cafe*	7992 Nova Scotia Trunk 7
Wired Monk	5147 Morris St

It became apparent in conversations with baristas that there is some confusion over government mandated regulation of reusables in the HRM. When speaking to some of the employees of coffee shops, the term “government regulations” came up as a reason to refuse reusable mugs. However, there are currently no government regulations mandating that food-service establishments should refuse reusable containers of any kind. Communications with one such business revealed that this was an internal agreement among restaurant/dining industry stakeholders. Nevertheless, some confusion remains as employees identified “government regulations” as a reason to refuse reusable mugs. This confusion could be due to misinformation, misspeaking on the part of the employees, or it might appear the simplest way to communicate boundaries with clients.



Moreover, some coffeeshops said that it was left to the barista's discretion as to whether they were comfortable accepting reusable mugs from clients on a case-by-case basis. It would be good for these businesses to brainstorm solutions to navigate a situation like this by first asking under which circumstances their employees are comfortable handling reusable mugs. By opening a dialogue with their employees, these businesses can begin to establish and communicate a standard for the use of reusable mugs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local businesses should be empowered with knowledge that reusable mugs can be handled in a safe manner with proper contactless transfer and sanitation. This information can be communicated in a variety of ways, including infographics (Appendix C) and through various forms of social media content (Appendix D). For example, blog posts could be used to communicate the safety of reusable containers to encourage community members to begin using travel mugs again and use effective social media campaigns to spread awareness about the issue. To help spread this project's findings, a one-page summary has been prepared (Appendix E).

Moreover, further awareness on the adverse effects of plastic pollution could be raised to call attention to the effects of plastic pollution on public health. By relating plastic pollution to the current state of the world, the ban of SUPs might be perceived less as optional and more of a necessity. Based on the project's findings, recommendations for customers and businesses have been synthesized to help support using reusable mugs during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

FOR CUSTOMERS

- Wash reusable mugs between every use to keep you and your barista safe.
- Remove mug lids while your barista makes your drink to ensure contactless transfer with surfaces that touch your mouth.
- Comply with safety measures as outlined by the establishment and your barista.



FOR BUSINESSES

- Inform yourself and employees about government regulations.
- Talk to your employees about a plan that allows contactless transfer of mugs.
- Communicate and be prepared to explain required safety measures with client's signage and other forms of communication, like social media posts or website announcements, may be helpful to do so.

CONCLUSION

Organizations like STIN are working to inform and encourage policymakers to uphold their commitment to phase out SUPs (Vanapalli, et. Al., 2020). Based on the number of coffee shops that allow reusable mugs and under what conditions, individuals and organizations can share this information to tackle this problem and encourage positive behavior change among community members. The unusual and initially misunderstood nature of COVID-19 had many business owners take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Plastic pollution was considered an international crisis years ago in 2017, and it is important to act on it properly to avoid it becoming a public health crisis in the future. Studies show that single use plastics are not safer than reusable containers. With this information, individuals, business owners and organizations can continue to raise public awareness on the issue, and perhaps encourage municipal or provincial policy makers to continue supporting SUP bans for the health of future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was conducted by Florence Wallace for the Stop Trashing It Network (STIN). STIN is a non-profit organization based in the HRM that's shifting awareness into action, by building capacity for individuals reduce waste in their lifestyles. STIN raises awareness on waste management and encourage community members to take a pledge to eliminate single use plastics (SUP) gradually over time. STIN has a [blog](#) with resourceful entries written by the network's ambassadors, and also hosts workshops, which have recently gone virtual during the



COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, STIN conducted a study on pandemic waste habits in collaboration with a Master student at Dalhousie University student, Olivia Giansante, which helped inform this study. Thank you to all the businesses who participated in this project who are working hard to reduce waste during this pandemic. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed!

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - COFFEE SHOP CONTACT SPREADSHEET

Cafe Name	Address	Accept Mugs?	(If yes) Policy?
Almonak Halifax	5659 Almon St, Halifax, NS B3K 3X2	no	pour into a seperate disposable mug, then pour into travel mug
Alteregos Cafe & Catering	2193 Gottingen St, Halifax, NS B3K 3B5	yes	none
Balancing Rock Coffee House	1919 Upper Water St, Halifax, NS B3J 3N2		
Bird's Nest Cafe + Catering	1547 Barrington St, Halifax, NS B3J 1Z4	yes	must be clean on arrival
Cabin Coffee	1554 Hollis St, Halifax, NS B3J 1V3	yes	take lid off, depends on person working (comfort level)
Cafe Aroma Latino	5780 North St, Halifax, NS B3K 1N7	yes	
Cafe Good Luck			
CAFE LARA	2347 Agricola St, Halifax, NS B3K 4B7	yes	take lid off, wipe down
Cafe Marco Polo		no	
Cafe Taiyaki 52	2009 Brunswick St, Halifax, NS B3J 2G8	yes	take lid off, wipe down
Cempoal Calavera Negra Cafe	2374 Agricola St, Halifax, NS B3K 4B6	yes	
Coburg Social Bar & Cafe	6085 Coburg Rd, Halifax, NS B3H 1Z3	yes	
Coffee Matters Dartmouth			
Coffeology espresso co	1587 Dresden Row, Halifax, NS B3J 2K4		
Cottage Cafe		no	
Dilly Dally Coffee Cafe	6100 Quinpool Rd, Halifax, NS B3L 1A1	yes	wipe outside, prefer clean mug with no product inside
Espresso 46	2867 Isleville St, Halifax, NS B3K 3X4	yes	bring in a clean mug
Glitter Bean Cafe	5896 Spring Garden Rd, Halifax, NS B3H 3B8	no	
Grounded Coffee Bar	1869 Upper Water St, Halifax, NS B3J 1S9	yes	remove lid, heat up mug
Hold Fast Cafe	5520 Almon St, Halifax, NS B3K 1T3	yes	cleaned and washed, give a rinse
Humani-T Cafe (Young)	5755 Young St, Halifax, NS B3K 1Z9	yes	brew it in a ceramic mug and ask customer to pour
Java Blend Coffee Roasters	6027 North St, Halifax, NS B3K 1N9	no	
Little Eden the Earth Friendly Cafe and Bakery	1996 Brunswick St, Halifax, NS B3J 2G7	yes	espresso: make shot, pour in and pour in milk, if more complicated, brew in



			a separate mug and pour in, never stopped accepting
Local Jo Cafe & Market	2959 Oxford St, Halifax, NS B3L 2W3	no	
Lucky Penny Coffee Co.	6440 Quinpool Rd, Halifax, NS B3L 1A8	yes	make in the jar, then pour into mug
Narrow Espresso	5570 Fenwick St, Halifax, NS B3H 1P8	no	
New Scotland Yard	brendan	yes	not grab lid, make sure it's washed and stuff
Odell's Gluten Free Bakery & Cafe	30 Farnham Gate Rd, Halifax, NS B3M 4R8		
Open Book Coffee	3660 Strawberry Hill St, Halifax, NS B3K 5A9		
Piece of Cake Fine Bakery & Cafe	1475 Lower Water St, Halifax, NS B3J 3Z2	yes	make a batch and pour it in
Port City Cafe			
Rabbit Hole Cafe	1452 Dresden Row, Halifax, NS B3J 3T5	yes	
Selby's Bunker Coffee & Gifts	shannon	yes	make sure to wash and keep lid so as not to touch
Seven Bays Cafe	2019 Gottingen St, Halifax, NS B3K 3B1	no	
Sine Coffee Labs	1505 Barrington St, Halifax, NS B3J 3K5	yes	10 cent discount, ask you to keep the lid
Steve-o-Reno's Cappucino	1536 Brunswick St, Halifax, NS B3J 2G2	no	
Tart & Soul Cafe	6389 Coburg Rd, Halifax, NS B3H 2A5	yes	clean, unused
The Board Room Game Cafe	1256 Barrington St, Halifax, NS B3J 1Y5	yes	prevent cross contamination
The Bread Lounge Bakery	5880 Demone St, Halifax, NS B3K 1X9	no	
The Daily Grind Cafe & Art Bar	1475 Lower Water St, Halifax, NS B3J 3Z2	no	
The Nook Espresso Bar & Lounge	2118 Gottingen St, Halifax, NS B3K 1B2	no	
The Other Bean	6220 Quinpool Rd, Halifax, NS B3L 1A4		
The Ville Caffeine Bar	5146 Sackville St, Halifax, NS B3J 0G7	yes	inspect mug, wash hands after
Transit Cafe	2816 Gottingen St, Halifax, NS B3K 3C9	no	
Trident Booksellers & Cafe	1256 Hollis St, Halifax, NS B3J 1T6	yes	no specific policy
Two If By Sea Cafe	K	no	
Uncommon Grounds	1030 South Park St, Halifax, NS B3H 2W3	yes	at employee's discretion, discount 20 cents, accept mugs as is
Uncommon Grounds (Spring Garden)	5665 Spring Garden Rd, Halifax, NS B3J 3A5		
Weird Harbour Espresso Bar	1656 Barrington St, Halifax, NS B3J 0C2	no	
Wired Monk	5147 Morris St, Halifax, NS B3J 1B1	yes	



Supporting Information for Reusable Mugs During COVID-19

This document provides reference information and a summary of academic research answering the question: Is viral transmission more likely to occur when using reusable coffee mugs over disposable cups?

- When COVID-19 emerged as a public health crisis in late 2019, many coffee shops made policy changes to refuse reusable coffee mugs for the time-being (Shah, 2020).
- Some have argued that single-use plastics (SUPS) are more hygienic (Vanapalli, Sharma, Ranjan, Samal, Bhattacharya, Dubey, Goel, 2020).

But are they really?

- COVID-19 is transmitted through aerosol particles, and can be transmitted through surfaces as well. It is also known that cleaning agents are effective in breaking down the lipid barriers of the particles, rendering them noncommunicable (Ahveninen, 2020). Recent studies suggest that viral particles survive 24 hours on cardboard and 3 days on plastic, so a vessel that can be washed is preferable (Vanapalli, et al., 2020).
- Some environmental groups are now advocating for the contactless transfer of properly sanitized containers.
- While recent studies suggest that **SUPs do not effectively protect from virus transmission**, there is a growing concern that plastic pollution will cause more public health crises in the future. “The amount of waste generated due to COVID-19 indeed threatens the existing waste management streams, meaning that plastic leakage/pollution may impose severe risks to both environmental and human health” (Vanapalli, et al., 2020).
- The outcome of recent studies suggests that there is **little difference between the safety of disposable coffee cups and washed reusable mugs**.
- **Reusable mugs can be handled in a safe manner with proper contactless transfer and sanitation.**

Given the available scientific evidence, it is possible to safely use reusable mugs while still preventing the spread of COVID-19 if proper measures are followed.

Prepared by: Florence Wallace on behalf of





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Additional Resources

1. [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\) - Canada.ca](#)
2. [List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19 - Canada.ca](#)
3. [List of hand-sanitizers authorized by Health Canada- Canada.ca](#)
4. [Preventing Covid-19 in the Workplace - Canada.ca](#)



APPENDIX C- REUSABLE MUG MYTHBUSTING INFOGRAPHIC

REUSABLE MUGS VS. DISPOSABLE:

THE MORE YOU KNOW

Covid-19 can live up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to 3 days on plastic.



The coronavirus' lipid membrane is weakened by soap, rendering the virus non-communicable.

Reusable mugs are just as safe as disposable cups when properly sterilized with contactless transfer.



Plastic pollution poses a threat to public health- the united nations declared plastic pollution a global crisis in 2017.



We hope you reconsider your policy on reusable mugs- let us know if you have questions!



STOP TRASHING IT



 @StopTrashingIt  www.stoptrashingit.org

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BUSINESSES ACCEPTING REUSABLE MUGS IN THE HRM



Broken down by policy April 2021

KEEP LID AND/OR WIPE DOWN MUG

CABIN COFFEE
CAFE LARA
CAFE TAIYAKI 52
CEMPOAL CALAVERA NEGRA CAFE
GROUNDLED COFFEE BAR
DILLY DALLY COFFEE CAFE
NEW SCOTLAND YARD
SELBY'S BUNKER COFFEE & GIFTS
SINE COFFEE LABS

ACCEPTS CLEAN MUGS AS IS

ALTEREGOS
BIRD'S NEST CAFE & CATERING
CAFE AROMA LATINO
ESPRESSO 46
UNCOMMON GROUNDS
WIRED MONK
HOLD FAST CAFE
RABBIT HOLE CAFE
STEVE-O-RENO'S CAPPUCCINO
TART & SOUL CAFE
THE VILLE CAFFEINE BAR
TRIDENT BOOKSELLERS & CAFE

WILL MAKE DRINK IN A SEPARATE MUG AND ASK YOU TO POUR IT IN

LITTLE EDEN THE EARTH FRIENDLY CAFE AND BAKERY
LUCKY PENNY COFFEE CO.
PIECE OF CAKE BAKERY AND CAFE
HUMANI-T CAFE

ACCEPTS MUGS, BUT POLICY IS UNKNOWN

BOYD'S PHARMASAVE
COBURG SOCIAL BAR AND CAFE
COFFEEOLOGY
DINAH'S SOURDOUGH
LAUGHING WHALE
LOCAL JO
THE FOURTH PULL
THE NOOK
THE OSNEY
THE TARE SHOP
UPROOTED MARKET AND CAFE

APPENDIX E – ONE PAGE SUMMARY OF “REUSABLE MUGS IN THE HRM DURING COVID-19”

Businesses That Accept Reusable Mugs in the HRM

Stop Trashing It Network compiled a list of coffeeshops that accept reusable mugs in the HRM during the COVID-19 pandemic to help HRM citizens know what to expect when visiting local establishments and make informed decisions on which coffee shops to visit for take-out coffee. Coffeeshops in the HRM were contacted via phone calls or in-person to inquire about their reusable mug policies.

Keep lid and/or wipe down mug	Pour drink into your own mug	Accepts clean mugs as is	Accepts mugs, but Policy is unknown
Cabin Coffee	Little Eden The Earth Friendly Cafe and Bakery	Alteregos	Boyd's Pharmasave
Café Lara	Lucky Penny Coffee Co.	Bird's Nest Cafe & Catering	Coburg Social Bar and Cafe
Cafe Taiyaki 52	Piece of Cake Bakery and Cafe	Cafe Aroma Latino	Coffeeology
Cempoal Calavera Negra Cafe	Humani-T Cafe	Espresso 46	Dinah's Sourdough
Dilly Dally Coffee Cafe		Hold Fast Cafe	Local Jo
Grounded Coffee Bar		Rabbit Hole Cafe	The Fourth Pull
New Scotland Yard		Steve-O-Reno's Cappuccino	The Nook
Selby's Bunker Coffee & Gifts		Tart & Soul Cafe	The Osney
Sine Coffee Labs		The Ville Caffeine Bar	The Tare Shop
		Trident Booksellers & Cafe	Uprooted Market and Cafe
		Uncommon Grounds	
		Wired Monk	