Hunger Mountain Co-op's Reusable Eco Container Program

In April 2016, Hunger Mountain Co-op began offering reusable takeout boxes in an effort to reduce single-use plastics. In this program, shoppers can purchase a break-resistant plastic takeout box for a one-time cost of $7. "This is a good option for customers who are seeking non-disposable takeout options and an opportunity for all of us who like take out to change our habits," shares Hunger Mountain Co-op GM, Kari Bradley.

Safety first

Hunger Mountain Co-op staff worked with the local health department to design a process that meets health standards to keep people safe while reducing waste. In this process, customers can use an Eco Container at the co-op by leaving their used container at the deli and receiving a clean one. The new container features a dissolvable day sticker, indicating that the container is good to purchase food in for that day only. Dirty containers are sanitized in the co-op's dish machine before they join the stack of clean Eco Containers that are ready for reuse. To comply with Vermont's health codes, customers may not use a container they have washed themselves. Eco Containers must be exchanged for a newly sanitized container after each use and before each trip to the food bar.

Purchased	Sold
144	124 (3 returned)
6.33 each	$7 each
$911.52 spent	$847 earned

Digging in

In a testament to their durability, Hunger Mountain initially purchased 144 boxes in April 2016 and has not had to reorder since. They selected the single-compartment model from Eco-Takeout, and customized the boxes with the co-op's logo. Co-op staff do not track how often the boxes are used, but they report that the boxes have met all expectations for functionality. For more details, see Hunger Mountain Co-op's Eco Container FAQ page.