Packaging Practices prior to Rethink Disposable:

- Disposable cutlery was used for dine-in customers
- Two sizes of disposable sauce cups with lids were used at the salsa bar

Dine-in customers at El Metate were served meals on ceramic plates and bowls but were provided disposable cutlery and portion cups from a self-serve station. Fernando, the owner of El Metate, had initially purchased reusable cutlery but never put it out due to a flu pandemic several years ago. In addition to being concerned about the safety of using reusable cutlery, he was also worried about potential loss of reusables mistakenly thrown in the trash by customers.

Recommendations Implemented:

- Replaced disposable cutlery for reusable cutlery for dine-in
- Replaced disposable sauce cups with reusable for dine-in

El Metate replaced dining room trash, compost, and recycling containers with bus tub racks. Customer bussing of tables prevents loss of reusable food service ware items like sauce cups and cutlery. Staff morale declined due to additional dishes needing to be washed, prompting the owner to purchase a new efficient dishwasher. The owner noticed an increase of dine-in customers due in part to the cashiers more diligently asking each customer if their order is for dine-in or take-out, in addition to the make-over of the dining room and the use of metal cutlery and ceramic sauce cups to improve the customer dining experience.

Francisco Hernandez, owner: “No matter how you see it, the Rethink Disposable program is beneficial to everyone.”
### Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Products Replaced or Minimized</th>
<th>% Disposable Reduction</th>
<th>Payback Period</th>
<th>Annual Savings (after payback period)</th>
<th>Annual Waste Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide metal forks for dine-in</td>
<td>Plastic forks</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>6 days</td>
<td>$2,349</td>
<td>941 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide metal spoons for dine-in</td>
<td>Plastic spoons</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11.3 months</td>
<td>$48</td>
<td>19 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide metal knives for dine in</td>
<td>Plastic knives</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>9 days</td>
<td>$2,109</td>
<td>1,014 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide reusable salsa cups for dine-in</td>
<td>Portion cups for salsa 2 oz</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>$3,270</td>
<td>1,308 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide reusable salsa cups for dine-in</td>
<td>Portion cups for salsa 3.25 oz</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>$1,181</td>
<td>369 lbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL* $8,957 3,651 lbs.

*The owner purchased a new dishwasher after program completion; therefore the cost impact of the new dishwasher is not included in the results above.

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### THE BOTTOM LINE

- 493,711 disposable items were reduced per year
- $8,957 in annual savings after payback period
- 3,651 pounds of annual waste reduction
- Elevated dining experience resulted in more customers staying on-site to dine
- Less litter prone food packaging walking out the door
- Bus tubs and racks helped reduce product loss
- No additional labor required

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*ReThink Disposable* is a Clean Water Fund program conducted in partnership with local businesses and government agencies. Generous support for the program is provided by a changing list of public and private funders. To learn more about the program, its partners, and funders, visit: [www.rethinkdisposable.org](http://www.rethinkdisposable.org).