

# CASE STUDY: Kirk's Steakburgers

**ReThink  
Disposable**  
STOP WASTE BEFORE IT STARTS

## BUSINESS PROFILE

**Name:** Kirk's Steakburgers  
**Business Type:** Fast Casual  
**Location:** Palo Alto, CA  
**On-site dining:** 48 seats  
**Take-out:** Yes  
**Ware washing:** Yes  
**Employees:** 8

**Kirk's Steakburgers** is located in the Town & Country mall across the street from Palo Alto High School in Palo Alto, California. Kirk's is a casual burger joint that serves up delicious burgers, shakes, and fries to the tune of 70's rock classics. Most of Kirk's customers are hungry high school teenagers coming from across the street for lunch and weekend shoppers.

## Packaging Practices prior to Rethink Disposable:

- ➔ Food served in disposable paper food trays
- ➔ Disposable paper and plastic cups were used for all soda beverages and water

## Recommendations Implemented:

- ➔ Replaced three sizes of paper trays with a reusable basket for on-site diners
- ➔ Replaced three sizes of disposable paper soda cups and plastic water cups with reusable cups for dine-in
- ➔ A bus tub cart with signage was placed near the exit for customers to return reusables



As a result of implementing **ReThink Disposable's** recommended practices, Kirk's Steakburgers is now **preventing the use of 83,036 items and 2,477 pounds of waste annually, while earning an ongoing cost savings each year of \$3,981** from the avoided food ware purchases. The owner invested \$220 to purchase 316 reusable baskets and 72 reusable water cups. Kirk's Steakburgers' soda vendor, Pepsi, provided reusable logoed tumblers for customers to use on site.

The weekday lunch rush is the busiest time and it is not uncommon for high school students to be lined up outside the door, so it was important for this business to introduce reusable food ware items without interrupting the staff's ability to keep up with demand. **ReThink Disposable** staff recommended that Kirk's Steakburgers purchase enough reusable cups and baskets to make it through high volume service without needing to pause and wash dishes.

Preventing reusable basket loss turned out to be a challenge. The owner reduced the number of waste bins on the floor and replaced them with more bus tubs and racks for customers to place reusable cups and baskets in the bus tubs and not accidentally toss them into the waste bins (as they were accustomed to with the disposable paper trays and cups before). Though customers consistently returned reusable cups to the bins for washing and reuse, Rick initially lost all his reusable baskets to the waste bins. Apparently, customers were mistaking the reusable baskets for disposable paper trays. This problem was successfully solved when the owner purchased a larger basket with a smaller sized paper food liner so that customers could see the reusable basket, recognize that it is not a disposable, and place in the appropriate bus tubs for washing.

**Rick Junker, Owner:** "The ReThink Disposable team made the changes very easy, they were very willing to do whatever it took to make this a success and I'm appreciative of that because I'm essentially a very lazy man."

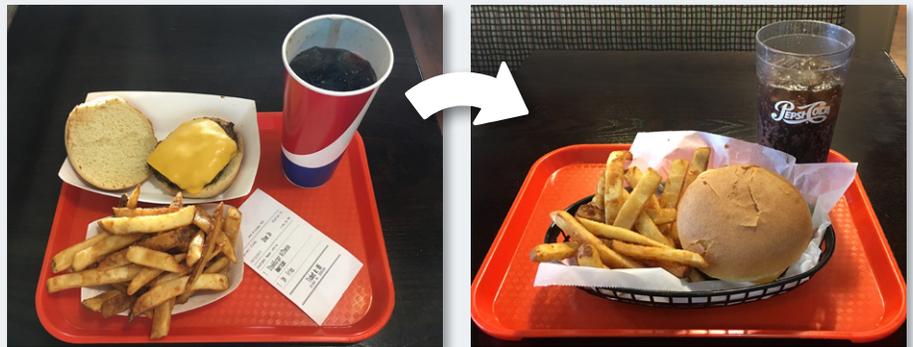


## Results:

Recommendation	Product Replaced or Minimized	% Disposable Reduction	Payback Period (months)	Annual Packaging Reduction (# of pieces)	Annual Savings (after payback period)	Annual Waste Reduction (lbs.)
Implement a reusable basket	1 lb Paper Trays	10%	15.9	1,403	(\$366.08)	19
Implement a reusable basket	2 lb Paper Trays	50%	3	5,015	(\$221.72)	100
Implement a reusable basket	3 lb Paper Trays	78%	0.1	38,185	\$3,287.87	1,146
Implement a reusable cup	16 oz Plastic Water Cups	90%	1.3	25,959	\$714.16	927
Implement a reusable cup	16 oz Paper Soda Cups	(+1%)	0	(+134)	(\$7.52)	(+4)
Implement a reusable cup	24 oz Paper Soda Cups	57%	0	7,955	\$463.15	248
Implement a reusable cup	16 oz and 24 oz Paper Soda Cup Lids	24%	0	4,653	\$111.47	42
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>83,036</b>	<b>\$3,981.32</b>	<b>2,477 lbs.</b>

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- \$3,981 in annual net cost savings
- 83,036 disposable items reduced per year
- 2,477 pounds of annual waste reduction



(Left) BEFORE ReThink Disposable: Burger and Fries in Paper Trays and Soda in a Paper Cup for Dine-In. (Right) AFTER ReThink Disposable: Burger and Fries in a Reusable Basket and Soda in a Reusable Glass for Dine-In.

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).



Recycling & Waste Reduction Commission  
of Santa Clara County



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