

CASE STUDY: Lola's Chicken Shack



BUSINESS PROFILE

Name: Lola's Chicken Shack

Business Type: Fast Casual

Location: Alameda, CA

On-site dining: 48 seats

Take-out: Yes

Employees: 12

Ware washing: Dishwasher

Lola's Chicken Shack is a family-run restaurant, serving specialty fried chicken from scratch in a casual, friendly environment. They are a local favorite, conducting about 200 transactions per day and employ 12 staff. They have a robust catering clientele and about 50% of their orders are for dine-in. Customers place their order at the counter and seat themselves. Staff serve the food and bus the tables.

Packaging Practices prior to Rethink Disposable:

- ➔ Disposable plastic cups offered for water
- ➔ All high school students served in large disposable food boxes
- ➔ Sugar packets, disposable plastic stir sticks, and wrapped straws offered for coffee and cold drinks



Owners Mark and Nancy Rogers knew that their location near the local high school would present an interesting challenge. Service had to be quick and efficient, as students and other customers form a line out of the door at lunchtime. They relied heavily on disposables to speed up service. When the owners learned that they were using 52,430 disposable plastic water cups per year, they were ready to make the switch to reusable water glasses, but were concerned about increased water usage due to additional dishwashing.

Recommendations Implemented:

- ➔ Reusable water cups replaced disposable water cups
- ➔ Provided reusable spoons and bulk sugar dispensers for coffee and iced tea
- ➔ Unwrapped straws in a dispenser replaced wrapped straws
- ➔ Minimized disposable foodware for students
- ➔ Eliminated disposable lids for students

The **ReThink Disposable** recommendations improved the dining room experience, saved staff time, and streamlined the operation. The new reusable water glasses were an easy switch to make with a very low up-front cost. Washing them requires only three additional loads and five extra gallons of water consumed in the dishwasher per day. The owners also appreciate the time and money they save now that they no longer have to order thousands of disposable plastic cups.

The unwrapped straws in a dispenser with signage reading "Do you *Really* need a straw?" resulted in a surprising 43% reduction in straw usage! The owners have noticed that fewer straws and wrappers to sort out of bus tubs have led to a faster, streamlined dishwashing process. The self-service area looks clean and organized with the elimination of wrapped straws, stir sticks, and sugar packets.

The owners were able to significantly minimize disposable foodware in the dining room for high school students. They replaced large to-go boxes with a smaller food tray, and eliminated disposable lids on items like mac and cheese. These simple changes save \$1,458 and prevent 573 lbs. of waste annually.



Before and After: Self-service Station



Results:

Recommendation	Product Replaced or Minimized	% Disposable Reduction	Payback Period <i>(including dishwasher)</i>	Annual Savings <i>(after payback period)</i>	Annual Waste Reduction
Provide unwrapped straws in a dispenser with customer signage	Wrapped straws	43%	1 year, 9 days	\$68	17 lbs.
Provide reusable spoons for stirring coffee	Plastic stir sticks	100%	0 days	\$9	1 lb.
Provide reusable cups for water	10 oz Plastic cups	100%	15 days	\$1,670	809 lbs.
Replace large box with smaller food tray for on-site dining (students)	Paper food box	45%	0 days	\$1,458	573 lbs.
				\$3,205	1,400 lbs.



Mark Rogers, owner: “There is less trash in the self service area due to straw and sugar wrappers, and no more overfilled garbage cans. In a nutshell, it’s a win, win, win. It’s a win for the planet, a monetary win for me, and an operational win.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

- 65,022 disposable items reduced per year
- \$3,205 annual savings after payback period
- 1,400 pounds of annual waste reduction
- Increased water usage for the reusable cups was negligible and less than 5 gallons per day
- Increased operational efficiency (saved staff time)
- Improved dining experience (less mess)
- Business has increased by 40% – with no increased trash

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.



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