



## Tips for the use of consumer-owned refillable food containers

### Understand the limitations:

- It is up to each individual retail business whether they will permit consumer owned refillable food containers to be used. Prior to bringing in and using refillable food containers, consumers should inquire if the retail food establishment is allowing this activity.
- As a result of an increased food safety risk, refillable consumer owned food containers that are cleaned by the consumer are not allowed to be used with unpackaged, self-service foods that require refrigeration for safety. Examples would include self-service frozen yogurt machines, hot buffets, and salad bars.
- Bulk food that does not require refrigeration for safety, such as nuts, candy, granola, wrapped candy, dry pasta or rice, may be placed in consumer owned containers provided the retail food establishment is voluntarily allowing this activity and has developed a written plan.

### Use an appropriate container for refilling with food:

Consumer owned food containers should be in good condition, with no cracks, open seams, or rust. Containers should be designed so that they may be easily cleaned and sanitized. Styrofoam and cardboard, for example, are not designed for reuse.

### Use a clean container:

- Dirty or unwashed containers are not allowed. Containers should be thoroughly cleaned before and after each use in the dishwasher or using a hand washing method.
- Linen and cloth bags used for produce and nuts in the shell should be visibly clean.

### Prevent cross-contamination:

Containers might *look* clean but may still be carrying bacteria or allergens. Scoops, tongs, or spouts used to dispense food should never touch consumer owned containers. Customers will need to ensure that containers are not set down in the food during filling and that unpackaged food from the consumer owned container is not placed back in a bulk food container.

### For more information:

[Link to the rule](#)

Contact your local food safety inspector: <https://oda.direct/FindFoodInspector>