

sustain ability

GUIDE BOOK

Having a WTF trying to understand sustainable packaging? This is the guide book for you!



let's do this

It's time to press "play"
on your mighty quest for
the perfect packaging.

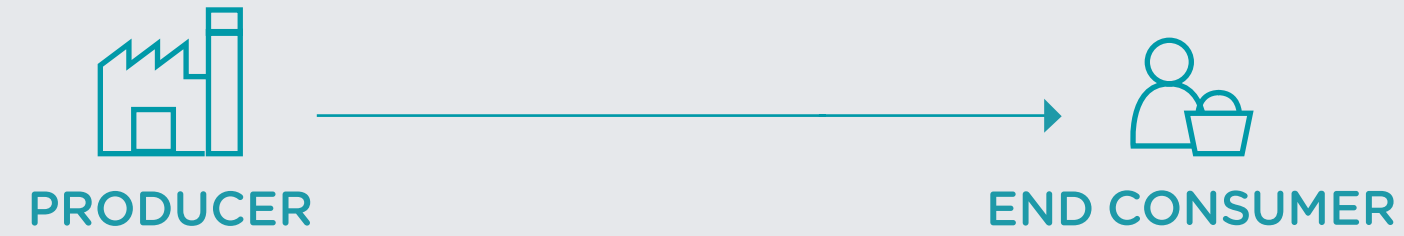


Today is the day

So you're hitting refresh on your packaging, huh? Maybe you're launching an insanely tasty new product (seriously, send samples). Or you heard the dreaded "packaging regulations" words recently. Perhaps your customers have caught the eco-friendly bug. No matter how you got here, this book can guide you to sustainable packaging nirvana - one step at a time.



direct-to-consumer



selling through retailer



You might have a +1

Here's the deal: eating trends right now are all about affordable luxuries, portioned servings, freshness and healthier ingredients. This could totally shake up how you think about your packaging. And if you're selling through a retailer, they might have an additional set of packaging "must haves" if you want your mighty fine products to land on their shelves.

TIP

#1

know thy customer

Suss out their needs, values and lifestyles.



TIP

#2

get market savvy

A little prep now helps avoid red tape pain later.

In English, please

Depending on where your products are sold, you might be impacted by regulations about what types of packaging are acceptable. Reading them can feel like trying to figure out cosmic signals from deep space. Why'd they have to go and make things so complicated? It doesn't have to be.

focus on the west coast

Focus on California/Washington regulations to plan for what might go national.

A good resource that's regularly updated and not written in code is [Packaging Dive's Policies Tracker](#).



Regulations unperplexified 😊

If you don't know your renewables from your recyclables, fret not! Most regulations fall into one of two groups: either focused on encouraging the use of more sustainable materials or dealing with waste management. Keep this in mind as your cheat code to unravel whatever regulation word salad is being tossed your way.



Material-based Regulations

BIO-BASED MATERIALS

Replace fuel-based plastics with renewable, bio-based materials.

- *National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution*
- *Hawaii's Disposable Food Ware Ordinance*

RECYCLED CONTENT

Encouraging recycled materials to reduce the use of virgin petroleum plastics.

- *Washington State's Plastics Laws*
- *CalRecycle Plastic Minimum Content Standards*

SAFER CHEMICALS

Phasing out "forever chemicals" and other potentially harmful additives in food packaging.

- *Safer States PFAS Tracker*
- *California's Proposition 65*

Waste Management-based Regulations

INFRASTRUCTURE ADVANCEMENTS

Expanding composting and recycling infrastructures.

- *USA Compost Act*
- *USA National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution*

REUSE, RECYCLE, COMPOST

Ensuring packaging is reusable, recyclable or compostable, including producer funding for end-of-life management.

- *California's SB-54 Solid Waste*
- *Various Extended Producer Responsibility Programs*

HARD-TO-RECYCLE PLASTICS

Limiting use of single-use plastics where alternatives exist, especially those that are difficult to recycle or compost.

- *Washington State's SB5022*
- *Canada's Action Plan on Zero Plastic Waste*



*This graphic is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not an exhaustive list of all packaging regulations that have been implemented in North America. Our goal is to provide you information on the current and future regulatory landscape, emphasizing the two types of regulations to consider for packaging compliance.

TIP

#3

looks are everything

Now's not the time for a cover-up.



Show off your assets

Make sure people can eat your tasty morsels with their eyes. Our [Ready-to-Eat Report](#) found that 86% of consumers are more likely to buy a product if they can see it first. Packaging that hides your goodies might work online, but on a store shelf? Not so much. You need your packaging to be a magnet for customers, not hurt your sales.



CRYSTAL CLEAR SMOOTH WALLS
for big first impressions

FITTED COMPARTMENTS
for smooch free protection

HIGH PROFILE STACKING
for eye catching visibility

Stale is not in style

When the seal is broken or the leaves are limp, no one is purchasing that product. Choose packaging with good oxygen and moisture barriers that keep your food protected and hygienic before and after opening. Think tamper-evident seals and re-closable lids for smaller servings. The longer your food stays fresh on the shelf and at home, the less food waste ta-boot!



73%

of consumers said “freshness” is the most important factor when buying food.

55%

are worried about their food being tampered with.

[Ready-to-Eat Report](#)



TIP

#4

**fresh
is best**

Material and design both play a role to keep your products perky.

TIP

#5

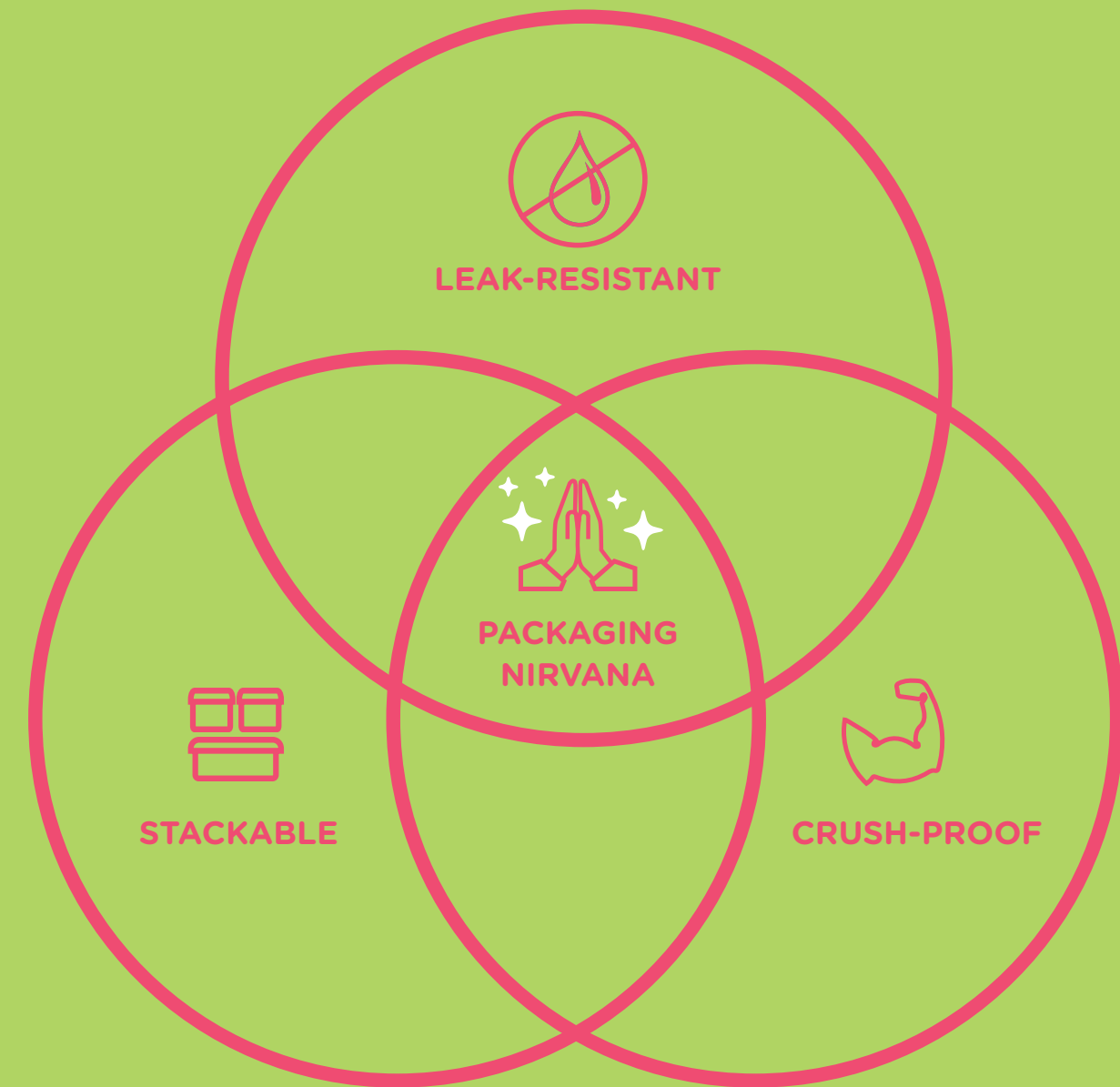
function first

Steer clear of spillage, slippage and... crumbage.



Keep things clean

Unless your product is as dry as the Sahara, leak resistant closures matter. Make sure you have a strong stacking or hanging feature so your packaging isn't sliding off the shelf because slippage and crushing lead to crumbage. You know the pile of micro-size chips at the bottom of the bag? Yeah those. Nobody likes those except Mike in shipping, and he eats anything.



Size matters

If your goodies are bouncing around in your packaging like in the back of your uncle's pick-up, they're likely getting smushed along the way. A custom design can save your product and might be more economical than you think! No wasted space and a snug fit mean more sustainability kudos, both for reducing damage and lowering your shipping footprint.

TIP

#6

focus on fit

Your (hot cross) buns should be snug as a bug.



before and after snapshot

Want to see some packaging renovations in action?

Behold these magical packaging makeovers.



TIP

#7

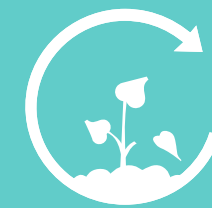
select good ingredients

Check out all the angles to choose the packaging material that's best for you.



You've got options

By now you'll know there's more to sustainable packaging than just materials. We always recommend reviewing your customer, retailer and design needs before making the final call on what sustainable material is best. And if you end up like us where product visibility, freshness and protection are at the top of the list, you're still not limited to a single choice.

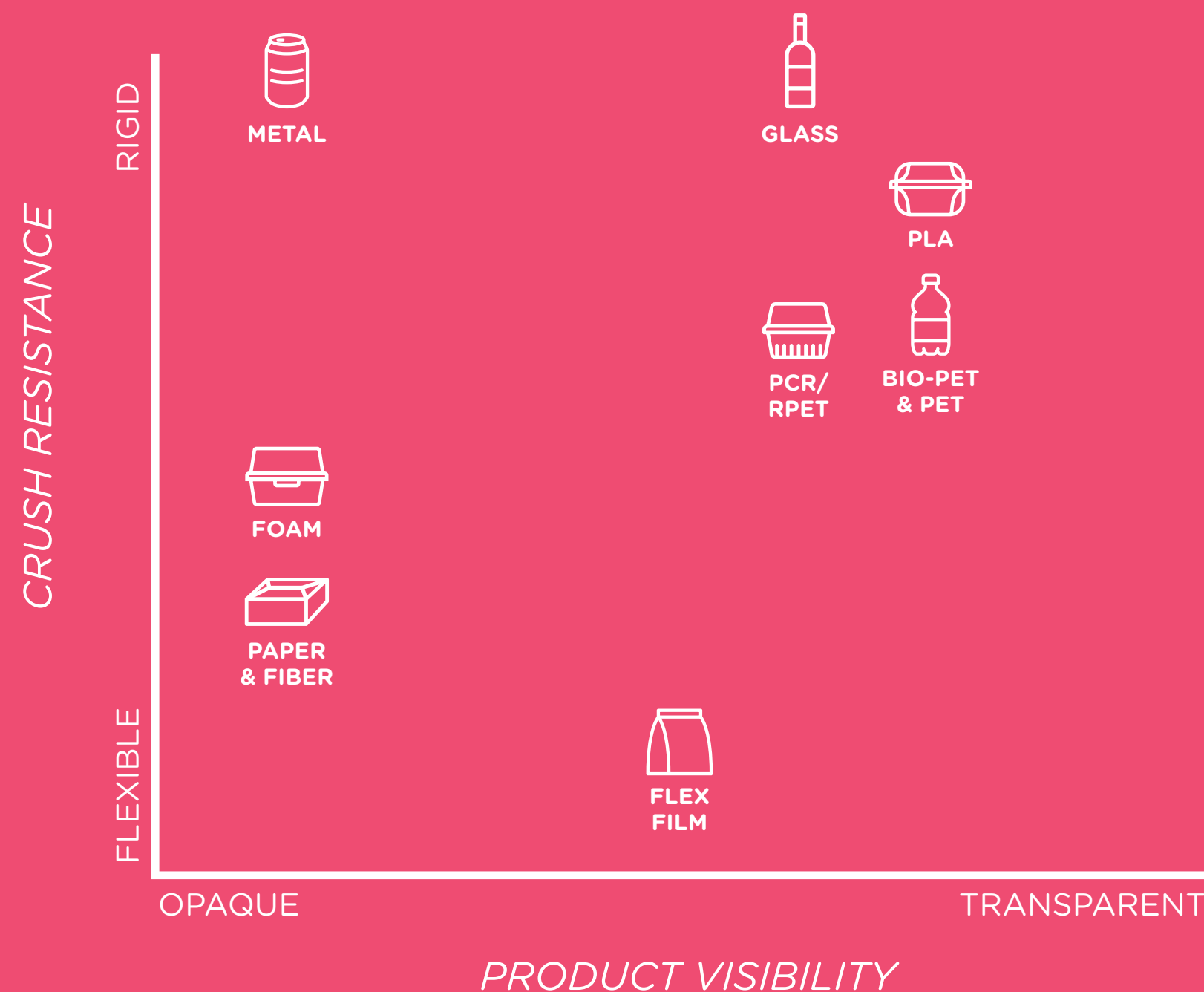


Love & packaging: best if clear and uncrushable

If you want customers to see your goodies in all their glory, you'll need to select a material, or at least design certain components of your packaging, to be fully transparent. And unless your products are ninja-level crush resistant all on their own, be careful about choosing a material that's too flexible.



sustainable materials summary



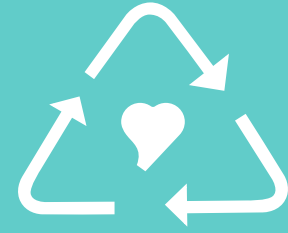
*This chart is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not an exhaustive list of all available packaging materials. Our goal is to help you choose a material that will provide optimal product protection and visibility taking into account the material's rigidity and clarity.

TIP

#8

plan for the end

Don't expect a silver bullet,
or bronze or nickel or tin...



A blue bin can only work so many miracles

If you make beverages and package them in PET, HDPE or aluminum, you're in a rare recycling circle! There's a chance if your packaging lands in a blue bin, a recycling facility will process and distribute the materials back to manufacturers to make new products. This is because beverage containers are relatively easy to visually identify, and most recycling facilities are not the highest tech of techie types of places, tbh. 🙄

“Wishcycling” is rampant

Oh, the things you'll see if you look in the bin! And it's not because people don't care. The rules change between regions and even between individual recyclers. This leads to massive confusion and a chicken noodle soup of things we expect are being recycled. Most recyclers don't sort soup, and that bin goes straight to the landfill.



Less is always more with packaging

One big way to simplify packaging disposal is to keep material choices as clean as possible. Pick curbside recyclable or compostable if you can. Don't mix materials. Remember coated papers are often not recyclable. Knowing there's no silver bullet for end-of-life is why we focus on using more renewable materials, less fossil fuel and no chemicals of concern. It's a way to make a positive environmental impact today, even while everything's not perfect.



it's not recycled or plant-based

Bio-PET can include 20% plant-based content AND up to 25% post consumer recycled (PCR) material. That meets most PCR regulations, plus gives a bio-based boost!

end-of-life cheat sheet

CURBSIDE RECYCLABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♻️ PET (Petroleum & Bio-based) ♻️ HPDE (Petroleum & Bio-based) Glass Aluminum Uncoated Paper & Cardboard
COMMERCIALY COMPOSTABLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLA & PHA Uncoated Paper & Cardboard PFAS-free Molded Fiber Petroleum-based PBAT (Flex Film) Cellulose (Flex Film)
RECYCLING DROP-OFF DEPOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♻️ LDPE (Flex Film) ♻️ Polypropylene
LANDFILL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♻️ PVC ♻️ Polystyrene (Including Foamed Polystyrene) Multi-material pouches & boxes ♻️ Plastics (All Except Certified Compostable) All Curbside Recyclable Materials Containing Food Waste

*This chart is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not an exhaustive list of all available packaging materials. Our goal is to help you choose materials that are truly curbside recyclable or commercially compostable. End-of-life requirements vary by region. Check local waste management systems for compostability or recyclability guidelines for each material listed.

TIP

#9

location location location

Watch out for hidden environmental costs.



Shop local if you can

The distance your packaging travels can have a big impact on CO₂ emissions. Sourcing your packaging from far away usually also requires a larger order quantity and longer lead times. The less distance traveled, the higher opportunity to lower your carbon footprint, and the better potential outcome for the planet!



Don't add to the confusion

If you've been in the sustainability woods for any length of time, you've definitely come across "greenwashing". Consumers are really confused about packaging, but the solution is pretty simple. Focus your marketing message on what your packaging is made of and what people should do with it when they're done. And back it up with independent testing.



follow the rules

The [FTC Green Guides](#) are a great way to stay on track with your marketing. Further enhancements are expected soon.



TIP

#10

keep it simple

Stick to the facts to share the boss sustainability moves you're making.



take a step

Things don't have to be perfect to make a positive impact.

You'll be rewarded for your efforts

From our experience, more often than not your customers will respond positively to the efforts you make toward sustainability, even if every final detail hasn't been perfected. Start small, maybe pick a single product in your assortment to get going and then make bigger changes as you feel more comfortable and confident with your design, material and marketing choices.



100+ Eco-friendly Packaging Designs

Expertly crafted to amp up product visibility, keep your goods fresh, safe and protected.

Multi-purpose, Bakery & Produce Food Containers

Sweet or savory, we can help you find your sustainable solution.

Certified Compostable Packaging

99% plant-based materials and no chemicals of concern.

Curbside Recyclable Packaging

20% or more plant-based materials with up to 25% post consumer recycled content (PCR).

Perfect-fit Custom Packaging

Thoughtfully engineered and tested packaging that we'll design with you to fit your products just right.

**good,
natured**
better everyday products

craving for more?

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