



Thank you for your interest in recycling with Gimme 5. We have created this write up to help explain the history of Gimme 5, the current state of Gimme 5 and where Gimme 5 is going in order to address the many questions we receive. If reading this does not clear up your questions we are glad to communicate further. Thank you for your patience and for your full read through of this.

Background:

Preserve founded the Gimme 5 program together with partner companies in 2007 in order to help partners provide end of life recycling solutions for their #5 plastic packaging at a time when #5s were much less commonly accepted across the U.S.A.

Working together with Whole Foods Markets and taking advantage of “backhaul” (empty trucks going back from Whole Foods Market stores to the distribution centers.) Preserve and Whole Foods set up bins to collect #5s. The collected plastic was then hauled back to the distribution centers and consolidated there until it could be picked up by Preserve, sorted, washed and reground for ultimate inclusion in products such as the Preserve toothbrush. Gimme 5 program partners over the years have included Stonyfield, Burt’s Bees, Seventh Generation, Plum Organics and many more. Since Gimme 5’s founding in 2007, a lot has changed in the recycling industry. In the present day, more than 60% of American households have access to #5 recycling and now many of the items that might have only had a home in the Gimme 5 program, such as yogurt cups, can now be recycled locally.

Changes to the model and contamination

Although many common items can now be recycled locally, plastic cutlery still faces recycling challenges due to its small size (it typically falls through the cracks of automated recycling machinery.) Because Preserve provides Whole Foods Market with their plastic cutlery for in store dining, we are moving the Gimme 5 program to focus on capturing this plastic cutlery that wouldn’t otherwise have a recycling home.

In order to do this efficiently, it is necessary to focus the Gimme 5 recycling stream at Whole Foods Market on cutlery only in order to reduce contamination that can be brought in through other, front of store Gimme 5 bins.

Over the past few years we have faced challenges with contamination in the Gimme 5 stream. Despite many fastidious recyclers and many committed Whole Foods Market team members who do their best to pull out incorrect items from Gimme 5 bins, there have been loads of Gimme 5 that have come back to us with far more trash than #5s. When the stream is contaminated it is costly to sort in the best case, and must be landfilled in the worst case. Neither scenario is good and Preserve’s main focus right now is on reducing contamination so that plastic cutlery can be captured and key aspects of the Gimme 5 program can continue.

As we complete the process of working with stores to remove standard Gimme 5 bins and introduce cutlery recycling bins, we ask for your understanding. Whole Foods Market stores participate in the Gimme 5 program on a regional basis and within that region, stores can choose to opt in or opt out. Some regions have already transitioned to recycling cutlery only and in others, Gimme 5 bins can still be found. Generally, however for those without access to #5 recycling in their communities, we are recommending the Gimme 5 mail in program rather than using a Gimme 5 bin.



Mail in

The Gimme 5 program has always accepted mail in recycling. Clean, rigid #5 plastics (no medical plastics please!) can be sent to:

Preserve Gimme 5
823 State Route 13
Cortland, NY 13045-6574

As well, Preserve has always run a toothbrush takeback program. Information on it is located [here](#).

The Greater Recycling Landscape

We realize that the removal of Gimme 5 bins is coming at a time that other upheavals are happening in the recycling industry and many towns and individuals are finding themselves without options. Although this is an inconvenience in the short term, we remain optimistic that many of the challenges that are currently being faced by the recycling industry as a whole will lead to improved solutions – in product design, in sorting systems and in the market for recycled materials. We encourage you to check out this article: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90321566/all-the-ways-recycling-is-broken-and-how-to-fix-them>

Thank you for your review of this lengthy communication. We appreciate your understanding and support as we work to improve the Gimme 5 program and to focus on its most critical aspects.

The Gimme 5 Team

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