



Returnr's bowls and cups | Photo source [Returnr](#)

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REUSABLE CONTAINERS MAKE TAKEAWAYS MORE SUSTAINABLE

 FOOD & DRINK

An Australian startup has developed a system that allows people to use reusable bowls and cups and return them to any participating outlet

Spotted: Startup Returnr has developed a sustainable scheme to replace single-use takeaway containers with reusable crockery. The company distributes its renewable stainless steel bowls and cups to participating restaurants and cafes, which then use the packaging for takeaway orders. Consumers pay an AU\$6 deposit to Returnr and after eating, they return the packaging in exchange for their deposit, or else forego their deposit and continue to use the crockery.

Returnr was founded by Jamie Forsyth, an entrepreneur who previously founded KeepCup, which sells stylish reusable cups in coffee shops. Forsyth felt that while an ownership model for reusable coffee cups worked well, it would not translate into other types of reusable containers. So, for his new business, he developed a way for people to opt-in for a reusable container that they did not need to keep.

The utility of the Returnr system is that the bowls and cups can be returned to any participating restaurant or café. The Returnr dishes can be used for delivery, take-away, and are also available when ordering from some Deliveroo outlets in Melbourne. Merchants using Returnr take responsibility for cleaning and storing the bowls and cups, and also pay the company a small partner fee. The fee is designed to be equal to or less than the cost of purchasing single-use bowls and cups.

Forsyth told [Smart Company](#) that Returnr has already saved tens of thousands of bowls from going to the landfill. "We've been pushing out into a much wider network of merchants and we've got a heavy product development pipeline also," he said. He also envisions customers picking up a coffee in the morning and then exchanging the cup for a reusable bowl at lunchtime.

At Springwise, we have seen a number of initiatives aimed at making takeaways more sustainable. Many of these innovations involve novel ways to replace single-use plastics with **biodegradable alternatives**, but they also include a reusable cup with an integrated contactless **payment chip**.

25th November 2019

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Takeaway:

The idea of allowing people to return or exchange their reusable bowls and cups to a wide variety of outlets could lower the opportunity cost of reusable crockery, which would hopefully make using it more common. For example, forgetting your reusable cup would no longer mean buying a new one. Returnr's business model is also an example of a new trend – sustainability as a service – which we are likely to see more of as consumers swap out single-use products with reusable alternatives.