

NOVEMBER 2018

Question #3 – Clean my recycling??

Dear Trish and Tabitha:

My question is about food containers. To what extent do I need to rinse a container that has food in it? Why does having food on/in the item even matter? If a cardboard food container has a plastic coating on it can I still recycle it?

Sincerely,
K.C. Hagersville

Dear K.C. Hagersville:

Yummmmm, food.....you've hit us with these questions right during the afternoon munchies period of the day!!!! They are good questions and a topic that is debated by everyone that eats and recycles (which we hope is EVERYONE in Haldimand County)! It's true, you must clean your containers & make sure your fibres are clean before recycling. And when we say this we mean you must ensure that items are free of food, liquid and residue before placing them in your recycling boxes. But WHY you ask? There are actually 2 really good reasons why BUT we're going to give you 3! Because that's just how generous Tabitha and I are!!!

- 1) Containers/fibres with contents remaining spoil other materials in the boxes.....Haldimand's recyclables are sold to end markets therefore we take pride in our clean recyclables and can ultimately sell it at a higher price in the end. I mean, who wouldn't get their car washed and vacuumed before selling it???? Right???

- 2) Containers/fibres with contents remaining can actually damage the machinery at the processing facility where they are taken to AND/OR may not be detected as to what they really are and therefore get sorted improperly. What this means is that if a peanut butter container that has peanut butter in it still is going down the assembly line at a speed of 100 miles per hour (ok, we may have exaggerated the speed a little BUT it really is mind numbing how fast it is going) then you have a container that is too heavy to be detected and blown off the assembly line by the infrared optical sorter into the proper sort compartment. So, now if it is not detected and manually pulled out of the wrong material pile, then it is contaminating some other type of material. And hey, who wants their **peanut butter** in someone else's **chocolate** and vice versa who wants their **chocolate** in someone else's **peanut butter**, at least when it comes to recycling!!!!
- 3) Now this answer isn't going to cost anyone anything BUT we still think that it should be mentioned. Depending on how/where you store your recyclables, why leave the food residue on the recyclable material tempting every racoon, bear, skunk, possum, rat, dog, cat, mouse, ant, fly, maggot, bee, fox, aardvark to your recycle boxes??? Sorry I answered a question with a question, but I think that you get the point.

As for your last question, about the cardboard food container that has a plastic coating on it.....that sort of sounds like an oxymoron in the recycling world who thinks in terms of containers vs papers. So, the short answer to your question is "no". But we won't leave you hanging as to why.....that wouldn't be fair! So cardboard with layers of other materials other than cardboard is not recyclable in our program..... the end markets don't want it! Thanks K.C. for taking the time to ask these questions! Keep 'em coming!