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First Natural Foodware Brand Can Wrap A Burger And Restore The Oceans

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Shake Shack joins forces with Restore Foodware. SHAKE SHACK

Next time you grab a burger, have some fries, drink a soda or a milkshake, think of all the waste that is generated by packaging, straws and cutlery. Now, multiply that by the 85 million people who in the US alone consumed fast food on any given day, according to a [survey published in 2018](#).

Despite the ban on single-use plastic, waste from the fast food industry is a huge concern in Europe too. France has banned restaurants from using [disposable tableware](#) for meals and drinks consumed in the premises from 2023. Toys and gadgets made of plastic in [kids menus](#) will be banned as of next year.

More and more fast food chains are then embracing sustainable alternatives. The burger joint Shake Shack has [announced](#) that it will introduce sustainable AirCarbon cutlery and straws from [Restore Foodware](#) at select restaurants in the US.

AirCarbon is a new technology developed by [Newlight Technologies](#), the parent company of Restore Foodware. Research to develop this new material started in 2007 and after ten years of development, the company was able to produce a cost-effective and carbon-negative biomaterial.

“What makes AirCarbon special is that it is a natural material made by life: that means it contains no synthetic plastic, degrades if it ends up in the environment, and, like growing a leaf, is made in a naturally-occurring process that reduces rather than adds carbon to the air,” says Mark Herrema, CEO at Newlight Technologies.

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The pandemic has accelerated the need to find sustainable packaging solutions as more and more restaurants can only be open for delivery and takeaway. Restore says their AirCarbon foodware stands up in hot and cold conditions, never gets soggy, and is dishwasher safe for reuse. It feels like plastic, but it degrades naturally if it ends up in the environment.

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The material is produced by replicating what already happens naturally in the ocean. Microorganisms consume air and greenhouse gas dissolved in saltwater to produce something called PHB that can be used as a replacement for plastic, fiber and leather.

“Our mission is to help end the flow of plastics into the ocean for this generation by replacing them with materials that work for both people and the planet,” Herrema says.

Certified carbon-negative by Carbon Trust and SCS Global, AirCarbon is currently produced in Southern California, but Newlight is planning on expanding their operations to Europe.

Meanwhile, Shake Shack is also testing aluminium water bottles to replace plastic water bottles at a few of their locations.

“Together, food and packaging containers account for almost 45% of the materials landfilled in the United States. To counter this issue, we are finding ways to get better,” says Jeffrey Amoscato, SVP Supply Chain & Menu Innovation at Shake Shack.

“We’re always looking at how we can create a more sustainable supply chain, from evaluating our packaging program to seeking out more sustainable solutions, which has enabled us to reduce our overall use of plastic across operations and delivery by 40% year-over-year,” he adds.

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