



MILK AND JUICE CARTONS

Milk and juice cartons are made from liquidpaperboard, which is created from high quality virgin long-fibred pulp. This is used so the cartons retain strength and rigidity, while allowing the board to be creased into a carton shape. The use of paperboard also means they are lightweight and are a form of efficient packaging as they require less energy for transport and refrigeration.

There are two different kinds of cartons used. Fresh milk cartons are an example of gable top cartons and are made from paperboard sandwiched between two layers of plastic. They can also have a layer of foil and another layer of plastic to improve shelf life.

Asceptic bricks are the tetra packs and 'long life' liquid cartons that have an additional aluminium foil layer which acts as an air or oxygen barrier. Asceptic bricks usually undergo a 'UHT' process, which kills the bacte-

ria in milks and juices by quickly heating and cooling. The cartons are made of three layers of plastic, one of foil and one of paperboard. As they are thicker, they do not need to be refrigerated during transport or storage.

As milk and juice cartons are made from paper and plastic, being mindful of the waste they create will conserve energy needed for their manufacture, the trees used for the paper, and the petroleum needed to make plastic. Recycling efforts of cartons in Australia are currently only estimated to be 14% (ALC), with approximately half of our councils participating in carton recycling programs. While these cartons are transport and refrigeration efficient, they are harder to recycle due to their combination make up of different materials. However, where possible, liquid paperboard is able to be recycled into high quality paper products such as photocopy paper. One milk carton can create 5 sheets of office paper!

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Cartons can be reused in many ways around the home. For example, to plant seedlings and store cooking oil waste.
- Cartons can also be composted, taking 3 months to break down in optimal conditions. Just remember they do contain thin layers of plastic, but if torn into smaller pieces, the type of plastic used will destabilise.
- If your council recycles milk and juice cartons, ensure you are recycling effectively by visiting www.planetark.org/cartons/cartrcyc.html If you are not sure whether your council recycles them, see More Information on how to find out.
- Use larger cartons instead of smaller ones, which use more packaging unnecessarily. For example, use drink bottles for school lunches instead of single serve juice cartons.

MORE INFORMATION

- www.environmentdirectory.com.au/associations/alc.html - Association of Liquidpaperboard Carton Manufacturers. As well as providing lots of information on the life cycle of milk and juice cartons and ideas on how to reuse them, a link is included where you can find out if your local council recycles milk and/or juice cartons.
- www.ace.be/ - The Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment (ACE) is an international association of paperboard and beverage carton manufacturers.
- www.planetark.org/cartons/carton.html - how to make paper from cartons at home.