

PET Thermoforms

Good Things Worth Knowing

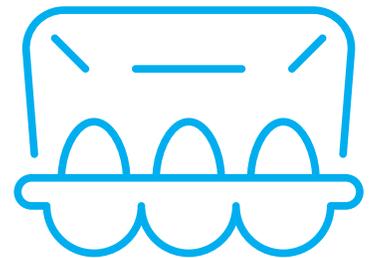
PET (polyethylene terephthalate) thermoforms—clamshells, trays, tubs, clear egg cartons, lids, and cups—are molecularly equivalent to PET bottles. They share the same #1 resin identification code, usually surrounded by a triangle.

PET thermoforms are also safe, lightweight, shatter-resistant, and exceptionally clear, which make them an excellent choice for packaging fruits, produce, salads, baked goods, takeout foods, and a myriad of other products.

And because thermoforms are made of PET, they're fully recyclable.

PET Thermoforms Are a Preferred Packaging Material

- FDA-approved for food contact.
- Fully recyclable and can be made from up to 100% recycled PET.
- Chosen by leading brands to package bakery items, fruits, vegetables, salads, and more.
- Part of [berry growers' commitment](#) to use 100% recycle-ready packaging.



More Than Three Decades of Proven Use

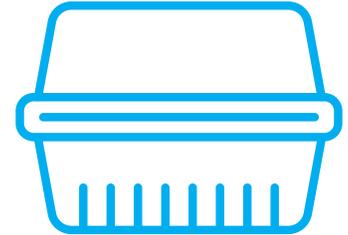
Since the 1990s, post-consumer recycled PET has been used in PET thermoforms for both food and non-food packaging. Over the past five years, the number of recycled PET thermoforms has continued to grow. In 2024, [the US and Canada collected 264 million pounds](#) of PET thermoform packaging for recycling. New markets have enabled Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) to expand the recyclables they accept to [include thermoforms](#).

Advantages of PET Thermoforms

Pound for pound, PET thermoforms deliver higher value at lower cost and lower greenhouse gas emissions than many other packaging alternatives, including laminated cartons, bagasse (pulp), and paper- and wood-fiber molded materials. PET thermoforms typically have thin yet strong and durable sidewalls, saving material and weight. They are often designed with easy-to-open and tamper-evident features that help protect the product while allowing consumers to see its freshness.

Here are more of the many PET thermoform benefits :

- **Transparency:** Clarity of PET permits people to easily view products.
- **Contamination protection:** Edges can be sealed if airtight protection is needed.
- **Freshness:** PET thermoforms help keep food fresher, reducing spoilage and waste.
- **Multi-use:** Unlike single-use packaging, PET thermoforms can be cleaned and reused, reducing their environmental footprint. And they can be recycled!
- **Versatility:** Can be customized to accommodate products of any size or shape.
- **Ruggedness:** Can survive impact and handling during transport.



Recycling Facts

PET thermoforms are an important end use for post-consumer recycled PET. Each year, the US turns millions of pounds of post-consumer recycled PET into new thermoforms, used to protect and transport food and other important products to consumers. **In 2022 and 2023, the [average level of recycled content](#) for PET thermoforms manufactured in the US and Canada exceeded that of PET bottles.**

A full-circle value chain for PET thermoforms continues to expand, including package manufacturers, retailers, recycling collectors, MRF operators, PET reclaimers, and recycled PET end users.

Reclaimers representing the majority of US capacity report they routinely process PET thermoforms with PET bottles.

Over the years since NAPCOR first began tracking PET thermoform recovery, total collection [increased by a factor of almost six](#) in 2024.

Challenges We're Addressing

To make PET thermoforms even more recyclable than they already are, brand owners and manufacturers are now:

- Adopting best practices to address design-for-recyclability issues.
- Making labels less difficult to remove or sort from PET.
- Supporting equipment innovations with advanced recognition capabilities to enhance auto-sorting.
- Supporting MRF infrastructure retention and investment.

Learn more about PET thermoforms at napcor.com/recycling/thermoform-recycling.

Discover the positive benefits of PET plastic at positivelypet.org.

