

TIME

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME

PLASTIC



WITH YOUR ICE CREAM?

Designing for food and drink
with the environment in mind

BY GINA ZHANG

Would You Like Some Plastic with That?

That spoon that you used for 20 minutes will sit in a landfill for 500 to 1000 years

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The food and drink industry produces so much trash every year, yet many people don't take that into consideration when they walk out of Starbucks with a large mocha frappuccino, or when they decide to make a stop at Ben and Jerry's for some delicious ice cream. Every year in America, about 25 billion styrofoam coffee cups (Starbucks customers alone use 4 billion to go coffee cups) and about 40 billion plastic utensils are thrown away, left to sit in our landfills for the next 500 to 1000 years. Even though one time use items can be really convenient when it comes to getting food and drinks outside your home, it is having a huge impact on our environment. We need to start rethinking the way the food and drink industry works, and start caring about how we consume our food and

drinks.

In order to combat these issues, I decided to take on two separate projects in my 2017 fall semester at Rhode Island School of Design, also known as RISD, in a class called Shape of Taste. The first project takes a closer look at the use of disposable cups in the drink industry, primarily around the RISD campus. The second project focused on the use of spoons for ice cream, which eventually led me to create a new product for ice cream, eliminating the need for a plastic spoon when you get your ice cream in a cup. Even though the projects tackle two different sectors of the food and drink industry, the overall goal was to reduce the amount of plastic waste going into our landfills every year.



Landfill 25 billion styrofoam coffee cups
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Project #1: Reusable Mugs & Bottles in Cafes

The first project was called Reusable Mugs & Bottles in Cafes, and it focused largely on whether or not people actually bring their own reusable bottles to cafes, and if the cafes actually advertise the discounts they give, or if they even accept the reusable bottles that are brought in. I started out this project wondering why people don't usually bring in their reusable bottles, and I originally assumed it was just because it was inconvenient to wash and bring around. I assumed that what was needed was just a better designed bottle that people are more willing to bring around. It turns out, the problem runs a lot deeper than that. This project originally started out with the idea that one product would solve everything, but ended up being an exploration on how complex the beverage industry system is.

In order to understand the relationship of reusable bottles and the drink industry, the first thing I had to do was order a drink with a reusable bottle in order to understand the situation, so I headed to Starbucks to order a chocolate chip frappuccino in a reusable bottle. From that experience, I quickly learned why no one gets a frappuccino in a reusable bottle. In order to make the drink, the barista had to use a plastic cup to measure out the ingredients for the blender. Once the frappuccino was in the bottle, I realized that the drink was so thick that there was no way to drink it other than with a straw. At the end, only a plastic lid was saved. Washing out the bottle after putting a frappuccino in it was another nightmare. The heavy amount of cream that went into the drink was very hard to wash



Starbucks frappuccino A drink as delicious as the Starbucks frappuccino could mean problems for our environment

off, making it very impractical to use a reusable bottle. I realized that there is a whole drink culture around the idea of a clear plastic cup or paper cup, no matter how destructive it is towards the environment.

As I interviewed more cafes around our campus, I started to realize a trend among many of them. A lot of the cafes don't advertise the discounts that they give for people who bring in their own bottles. The only store that did was Starbucks, but the sign was so tiny and filled with a lot of other information that I would have never noticed if the barista had not pointed it out. Also, I realized that some of the stores don't advertise reusable bottle discounts mostly because they never thought to do it, but they are open to the idea. There



were also a couple of stores who didn't do it though because they want their logo to be on the cups. Having the logo on the cup is a form of advertising, and builds a brand identity.

At the end of the Reusable Mugs & Bottles in Cafes project, more questions seemed to have been raised than solved. I realized that the drink industry is built upon disposable cups because they are extremely convenient, and builds a brand identity. In order to lessen the amount of trash that is produced from the drink industry, there is going to have to be a huge shift in the way we consume our beverages, even more than just bringing in our own bottles and mugs. I am not sure what the answer is to this problem, but looking into bottle sharing programs is definitely something to consider. Some quick solutions that I have developed for the time being include an increase in the amount of signage inside cafes

advertising their reusable mug and bottle discount, and having tags and stickers for discounts on reusable bottles so cafes can advertise their name through those tags and stickers. These solutions are absolutely not the answer to the amount of trash the beverage industry produces, but it is a way to lessen the impact on the landfills while other better answers are being developed.



Tags and Stickers

Having tags and stickers is definitely not the solution to our problems, but it is an answer for the meantime while we find better solutions for the plastic trash from our drink industry.

Photoshopped Signs Many of the cafes did not have signs advertising their discounts. Most relied on customers to bring their own reusable bottles and mugs and asking for the discount.



Showing off the logo Providing stickers and tags allow customers to continue using their own reusable bottle, but also provides advertisement for the drink company. This could also potentially be a way to keep track of rewards.

WAFFLE

ice cream is you



Waffle Crisps

Waffle Crisps are designed to easily scoop ice cream without the use of a spoon. They can be eaten with or without ice cream.

Project #2: Waffle Crisps

Being an avid ice cream eater myself, I have seen the contents of the trash cans at ice cream and froyo shops, and all of them contain paper containers with a lot of plastic spoons. The plastic spoons were used for maybe about 20 minutes, and then they were being thrown away to rot in a landfill for 500 to 1000 years. This idea did not sit comfortably with me. I believe that we are using plastic in products where plastic does not need to be used. There had to be

another way to at least lessen the impact of plastic spoons on landfills.

Since my first project, Reusable Mugs & Bottles in Cafes, focused so much on a system, I wanted to create a product for my second project. The initial intent was to create an edible spoon specifically for ice cream in order to eliminate the plastic spoon waste being thrown into our landfills every year. I quickly realized that there was a more fun way to tackle this project, so my final design resulted in a new and fun way to eat

ice cream, without the need for a plastic spoon. What eventually emerged was my product, Waffle Crisps.

Waffle Crisps is a new and fun way to eat ice cream. It turns the ice cream cone into a scooper, allowing a person to eat ice cream from a cup without the need of a spoon. My original inspiration came from Tostitos Scoops. The idea that waffle cones and ice cream can be turned into a similar experience as chips and salsa intrigued me deeply.

Packaging *Waffle Crisps can be sold in stores or in the shops. They can be found in the ice cream cone aisle, along with all the other waffle and sugar cones.*



CRISPS

r friend!

In order to make Waffle Crisps a successful product, I knew I had to figure out the right recipe and shape. Waffle cones that are sold in stores today are too thin and weak to properly scoop ice cream. I had to develop a recipe that makes Waffle Crisps equally, if not better, tasting than waffle cones themselves, and strong enough to scoop ice cream right out of the carton. After some tweaking and some user testing, I managed to develop a recipe that was strong enough to scoop ice cream, and also was well received among my user testers. The way I see Waffle Crisps being sold is either in a bag on the shelves of a store, or as an option to get if you get your ice cream in a cup. The Waffle Crisps themselves are tasty

enough to eat as a chip, but compliments ice cream much better, the way Tostitos Scoops tastes better with salsa. By selling them in stores as a side though, the need for a spoon is eliminated, and eating ice cream becomes a completely different experience.

Waffle Crisps prove that you can do good for the environment without the user having to consciously think about doing good for the environment. In this project, just making another edible spoon did not seem like a good solution, especially since there are products out there like that already. By changing the whole experience of ice cream, not only is less plastic being thrown away in the process, but a fun way of eating ice cream has emerged.



What's your favorite ice cream?

You can eat your Waffle Crisps with any flavor of ice cream you desire. Our recommendation? Straight out of the carton.



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2



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Waffle Crisps are easy

Waffle Crisps are almost just as convenient, but significantly tastier than using a spoon