



Reusable Container Guidance for Retail

In 2021, the Maine legislature passed “An Act to Promote Bulk Retail Purchasing.” This legislation highlights the ability of consumers, with the consent and agreement of retail business owners, to bring clean, reusable containers from their homes to bulk purchase **shelf stable food** and **non-food** items. While the state of Maine has never prohibited this practice, many consumers and businesses alike have been unaware that this option is available. By following some simple guidelines, consumers can reduce the waste created by single use plastics. The Division of Quality Assurance and Regulation (QAR) would like to share best practice guidelines for both consumers and businesses outlining safe practices for the use of reusable containers for bulk purchases.

Consumers: Tare, Fill, Pay

- Utilize clean, dry, non-porous containers. Examples include: Plastic, ceramic, glass
- Prior to filling your container with the shelf stable or non-food goods, obtain a tare weight from the appropriate store department. This will prevent being charged for the weight of your container.
 - A Tare Weight is simply the weight of the empty container.
- Store employees should record the tare weight on the bag or container if unable to generate a final label with price.
- Once containers have been filled with product they should be closed, sealed, and labeled.
- You are ready for check-out.

Vendors: Tare, Label, Weigh

- Store employee verifies container is clean, dry and non-porous.
- Store employee weighs empty consumer container to obtain tare.
- Record tare weight.
- Either employee will fill container or return to customer for self-fill.
- If possible, store employee will generate final label and price reflecting tare.
- Consumer is ready to check out.

Please note: The use of reusable containers is entirely voluntary and occurs by mutual agreement of both retail vendor and consumer. This practice will occur at the discretion of the business owner or company. QAR recommends every participating business develop internal policies and protocols to facilitate the safe implementation of this practice. QAR inspection staff can provide support for this on an individual basis. Please contact QAR at (207) 287-3841 for more information.