








Plastics Article

Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago use plastics for a variety of reasons however not all should be used with food and drink. The following table lists the various types of plastics, their uses and whether they can be used for food.

Symbol	Plastics and their uses	Safe with food
	Polyethylene Terephthalate (PETE) – used for soft drink bottles, waste containers and vegetable oil bottles, water bottles, beer bottles, mouthwash bottles and many more	Yes
	High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) – film containers, vitamin bottles, milk bottles and butter tubs, detergent bottles, oil bottles, toys, plastic bags	Yes
	Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) – used to make caps, netting, shrink wraps, garment bags, bread bags, frozen food bags, squeezable bottles, fibre, tote bags, bottles, clothing, furniture, carpet, shrink-wrap, garment bags	Yes
	Polypropylene (PP) – used to make butter tubs, yogurts containers, caps for containers, wrapping to replace cellophane, carpets and food wraps	Yes
	Vinyl/Polyvinyl Chloride (V/PVC) – used in the manufacture of food wraps, vegetable oil bottles, blister packages, clear health and beauty bottles, bath and teething toys, shower curtains, upholstery, flooring, medical equipment, and countless other products, including cosmetics.	Better to avoid
	Polystyrene (PS) – egg cartons, fast food trays, and disposable cutlery	Better to avoid
	Other: This code indicates that the item is made with a resin other than the six listed above, or a combination of different resins.	Better to avoid

Source: http://www.thegreenguide.com/products/Kitchen/Plastic_Containers

WAYS TO EXTEND THE LIFE OF PLASTIC FOOD CONTAINERS

- I. Wash polycarbonate bottles (labelled #7) by hand with mild dishwashing soap to avoid degrading the plastic and increase leaching of BPA.
- II. Plastics do not last forever therefore inspections must be done for cracks or cloudiness on your reusable clear plastic bottles and containers. Throw out old, scratched plastic dishes and containers.
- III. Do not wash plastics in hot water as the plastics would begin to disintegrate and change in structure.

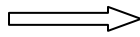
Microwaving and Plastics

Types of plastics best for microwave cooking:

Manufacturers indicate on a product that it is safe for use in the microwave by any of the following three ways:

The term “Microwave Safe”

An imprinted microwave symbol



Instructions for proper microwave use on the packaging label

BEST USE PRACTICES FOR MICROWAVING

Consumers should:

- I. Cook only in containers labelled for use in the microwave.
- II. Know that if plastic cookware is preferred, purchase polyethylene, which doesn't contain plasticizers¹.
- III. Leave a gap between food and plastic wrap.
- IV. Know that waxed paper is safe to use.
- V. Realize that paper towels can also be used, however the plain white kind is the best as the coloured or recycled fibres contain dyes or chemicals.
- VI. Not use recycled margarine tubs, dairy food containers or deli wraps in the microwave. They are not heat-tested, and could allow chemicals to leach into food.
- VII. Remove meat, poultry or fish from butcher trays and cling wraps before microwave defrosting.
- VIII. Not reuse plastic trays containing microwaveable entrees. Intended only for a single use, they're not safe for repeated microwaving.

¹ Plasticizer - any of a group of substances that are used in plastics or other materials to impart viscosity, flexibility, softness, or other properties to the finished product.

- IX. Not let the plastic touch the food.
- X. Not microwave plastic storage bags or plastic bags from the grocery store.
- XI. Know that a recycle symbol does not mean a container is safe to use or reuse in the microwave oven. Only a microwave-safe icon or wording to that effect does.
- XII. Transfer food to glass or ceramic containers labeled for microwave oven use if there are concerns about plastic wraps or containers in the microwave.