

Reduce, reuse, rotatable

This is a special feature from *PAX International's* [June 2021 Asia-Pacific digital edition](#).



Light weight and crisp rotatable china from GIP showcases the airline's inflight food menu

More and more airlines are moving to integrate sustainability into their brand to help reduce cabin waste and satisfy requests of post-pandemic consumers. According to the [IATA Cabin Waste Handbook](#) published in 2019, the airline industry produced an estimated 5.7 million tonnes of cabin waste in 2017, costing the sector US\$927 million. IATA research indicates that more than 20 percent of this cabin waste is comprised of untouched food and drink.

“Passenger concerns regarding airline waste practices are mounting and the sector is being challenged to embrace the circular economy,” said the report.

And, the [Buzz 2021 & Beyond – Trend & Insights Report](#) reveals that consumers are more likely to support brands that value both sustainability and luxury.

“Conscious luxury is the intersection of sustainability and luxury,” reads the Buzz report. “Luxury has moved away from wasteful opulence towards the value inherent in conscious design. Consumers are being selective about which brands they are loyal to, supporting brands that demonstrate a meaningful purpose and support an honest journey to make their world better.”

To support the shift, suppliers such as Global Inflight Products and RMT Global Partners are offering more variety in rotatable options.

Variety is possible

“As the popularity of eco-friendly products grew, airlines began to focus on transitioning their standard onboard products to incorporate more rotatable options, using reusable or recycled materials,” says Alexa Wordsworth, Graphic Designer at Global Inflight Products ([GIP](#)). “This was an important trend developing and now continuing around the globe that draws considerable attention from customers – and ultimately their passengers.”

GIP offers a range of rotatable products from trays, plates and bowls to glasses, cups, cutlery and blankets. The blankets can be made with RPET (recycled plastic bottles) and all of these rotatable products provide airlines with a one-stop solution for passengers and crew. GIP designs and customizes every onboard product to match the airline’s brand and requirements. Among the most popular materials is porcelain because it offers simple, long-lasting and impactful design for food service.

With airline customers spanning from major US carriers to small airlines in Africa, offering an endless variety of rotatable products helps GIP work with its customers to reduce global waste and support its “Green Is Possible” commitment.

“Rotatable products are a great way to keep waste down,” agrees Woon Yo, Graphic Designer at GIP. “It’s a smart and caring option.”

But, she explains, not all products have ideal rotatable solutions. This is especially true for the Economy Class cabin. Large volume products, such as paper napkins and disposable cold and hot cups, are better suited for GIP’s Green Is Possible line. Some of the products in the range include recyclable cups made from PET, and unbleached and biodegradable napkins made from sugarcane and post-industrial recycled paper.

A small step

The latest in the rotatable offering from [RMT Global Partners](#) is sustainable drinkware.

The custom-designed polycarbonate drinkware has crystal clarity and is an airline’s dream alternative to limited-use glass and single-use plastic, says RMT President and CEO Richard Tuttle. It offers superior durability and will not crack, shatter, break, cloud or discolor. The drinkware has been commercially wash-tested more than 2,000 times and has been pressure-tested to ensure that it can withstand substantial impact.

“It looks and feels like glass without the breakage and excess weight,” Tuttle tells *PAX International*. “It’s a small step for airlines to help reduce a large environmental impact.”

Tuttle says he is interested to see how the airline industry develops its collective sustainability initiatives, in particular to incorporate more sustainable practices throughout the supply chain from design to manufacturing to final delivery as part of a circular economy.

Warewashing challenges

While the demand for warewashing has dropped due to the general dramatic downturn in air travel and inflight catering, coupled with the amount of 'touch-free' meal packaging produced from single-use materials, Tomas Jämtander, [Diskomat](#) Marketing Director Flight Catering Solutions, says he is confident that rotatable products will make a comeback.

When the return to travel happens, Jämtander says, rotatable use will be on the rise, particularly for long-haul routes. Airlines will still want to highlight their onboard meal service as a competitive edge, he says. Plus, it's a better long-term alternative for the environment.

"From a perspective of a manufacturer and supplier of ware wash systems and dishwashers, the environmental impact is much gentler as opposed to the production and trashing of disposables," Jämtander says. "Even caterers require more resources to handle and sort different fractions of waste."

The uptick in demand should not be a problem for powerful machines such as those made by [Wexiödisk](#) and distributed by Stockholm-based Diskomat, he adds.

"More rotatables will naturally increase the load and demand for energy efficient, robust and reliable dishwashers," he says. "The turnaround time is a function of scheduling and machine capacity."

Based in Germany, warewashing company [Hobart](#) has also experienced the decrease in demand since last year, says Head of Sales Airline Catering Johannes Zengerle.

"From a warewashing perspective, it is of course better to use rotatable products instead of single-use items," he says. Confident that it will soon return to pre-pandemic demand levels, Zengerle points out the "reusable advantages" of rotatable products, including waste avoidance, sustainability, reusability, long-term cost-reduction and customer-friendliness.