

Cup By-law Update #1 - Free drinks exempt from cup fee

Single-Use Cup By-law Amendments - March 29, 2022

As of March 29, 2022, businesses can provide the following free drinks in a single-use cup without charging a cup fee:

- Drinks provided at no cost to the customer (e.g. free water, complimentary coffee, etc.)
- Drinks provided in exchange for a “drink voucher” (voucher specifies that it’s good for a free drink, or free drink + free meal)
- Drinks provided in exchange for points or rewards earned using a licence holder’s loyalty or rewards program.

NOTE: Drinks purchased with a monetary voucher, gift card or drink subscription service are not exempt from the cup fee. This exemption also does not include drinks ordered with meal combos or buy-one-get-one offers.

Frequently Asked Questions

What’s the difference between a drink voucher and monetary voucher?

A “monetary voucher” means a (printed or digital) card or voucher with a monetary value, including a gift card. Customers can typically use a monetary voucher towards the cost of any menu item.

A “drink voucher” is a (printed or digital) card or voucher specifically for a free drink (or a free drink and free meal) and cannot be used for other, unspecified menu items.

Can food vendors avoid charging the cup fee by selling points and rewards through loyalty programs? (for example: customer pays \$5 for 100 loyalty points and then redeems those points for a “free drink”)

No, this exemption to the cup fee does not include points or rewards that have been purchased by the customer. Points and rewards are valid if they are earned on past purchases, provided in exchange for engagement activities (e.g. customer surveys), given as a welcome or sign-up bonus, etc.

Can food vendors avoid charging customers the cup fee by selling drink vouchers? (for example: business sells a drink voucher to a customer who then immediately redeems it for a “free drink”)

No, this exemption to the cup fee does not include drink vouchers purchased within 3 hours of the drink being ordered.

Download a single-use item toolkit at vancouver.ca/reduce-single-use