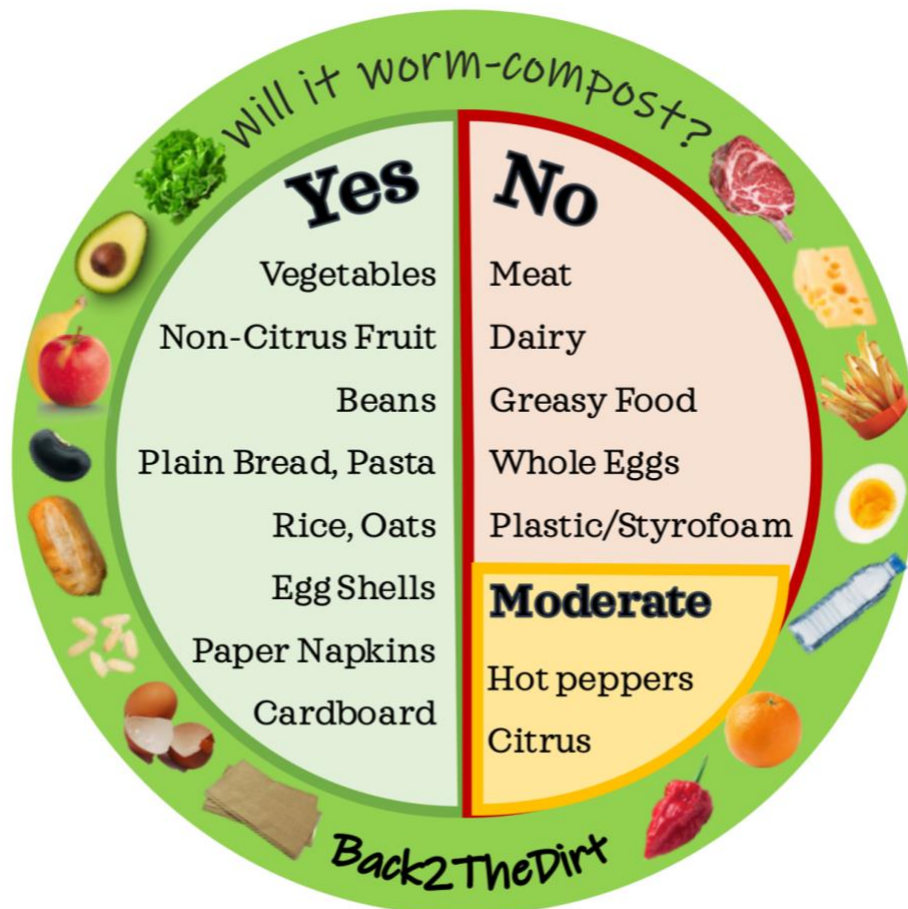


Back2TheDirt Compost Guide

Thank you for your interest in composting with us! We want to help you succeed every step of the way. If you ever have a question about an item not listed, feel free to call or text 513-212-6955 or reach out to us via email at back2thedirt@gmail.com.

The Basics

Here is a quick reference guide for most major categories of food. This will be included on the lid of every Back2TheDirt bucket to help aid in the fast and accurate sorting of your food waste. **We compost with worms, so the list may be different than what you are used to, if you have composted elsewhere.** Give it a read over.



The Big No-No's

Here is a list of items to avoid putting in your compost bin. It may be helpful to remember that **worms are like vegans** a.k.a if a vegan can't eat it, a worm can't eat it either.

- **Meat & Bones:** rotting meat can introduce harmful pathogens to our worm bin and will attract animals. Bones take a long time to break down and should also be avoided.
- **Dairy:** dairy cannot be eaten by the worms and the smell attracts animals
- **Eggs:** egg whites and yolk have similar issues to dairy & meat. Eggshells are compostable though!
- **Greasy Food/ Oils:** worms require oxygen, oils can coat worms making it hard for them to get oxygen or it can float to the top of a pile, due to its low density, and prevent oxygen from flowing through the pile. Greased stained paper products are fine, but please avoid fried foods or foods coated in grease.
- **Highly Processed Food:** highly processed foods often contain dairy, oil, high levels of sugar, or other preservatives that are not great for the worms, they are best avoided.
- **Compostable Plastics:** compostable plastics require high heats. Worm composting occurs between 50-90 °F, and thus does not get hot enough to break it down. Please only add compostable plastic certified as “backyard compostable”.
- **Traditional Plastic:** plastics breakdown into microplastics when exposed to UV rays, but will not break down in a compost pile
- **Produce stickers:** produce stickers are plastic and will not decompose.
- **Yard Waste:** yard waste can contain weed seed and hard to break down woody material better suited for thermophilic composting, rather than worm composting. The City of Cincinnati accepts yard waste with regular trash pickup. Learn more here: <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/public-services/yard-waste/>
- **Gum**
- **Pet Feces:** though worms will breakdown poop, for our health and safety we prefer that you do not include it
- **Fireplace Ash:** this is high in ammonia and can kill the worms in high quantities

Add in Moderation

- **Citrus** (Oranges, Lemon, Lime, Grapefruit, Tangerine, etc...): Citrus is very acidic. The acid will breakdown after a few weeks, however we want to avoid creating big pockets of acid that can harm the worms. Please do not fill more than half of your bucket with citrus.
- **Hot Pepper/Spicy Food**: Not only does spicy food burn your tongue, like citrus, it can burn the worms' skin. That said, it will also breakdown. Please do not fill more than half of your bucket with hot peppers.
- **Salt**: High levels of salt are not good for the worms or the resulting worm castings. Please only add lightly salted foods. There should not be more than 3 teaspoons worth of salt per bucket.

Vegetables/Fruit

Worms love their fruits and veggies—and they make great compost material.

- **Rotting Veggies/Fruit**
- **Moldy Veggies/Fruit**: mold is fine and will not hurt the worms
- **Apples**
- **Watermelon** (including rind): worms love watermelon!
- **Pumpkins**: worms love pumpkin! Ask for an extra bucket if you think you will need more room.
- **Bananas**
- **Berries**
- **Lettuce**
- **Avocado** (including pit and skin)
- **Corn** (including cob)
- **Raw or cooked potatoes**: do not include potatoes that have been fried or cooked in oil or potatoes with butter or sour cream (or other dairy)
- **Tomatoes**
- **Onion**

- **Cucumber**
- **Mushrooms**
- **Cooked Veggies** (if they are not cooked in oil)
- **Frozen Fruit**
- **Tofu**
- **Beans**
- **Nuts:** avoid heavily salted nuts
- **Nutmilk:** will want to add to your bucket right before pickup, excess liquid can cause bad smells in the bucket

****Reminder: No veggies coated in oil (like lettuce with dressing)**

Plain Grains

Grain based food, such as products made from wheat, rice, or oats is perfectly good for compost (since it is plant derived). Just make sure to keep it plain.

- **Plain Bread** (Moldy is fine)
- **Cooked Pasta:** a some tomato sauce on the pasta is fine. Do not include pasta with a dairy-based sauce (such as alfredo) or pasta soaked in oil or butter.
- **Cooked Rice**
- **Flour** (All Types)
- **Oatmeal**
- **Cooked Couscous**
- **Cooked Quinoa**

****Reminder: No grains with dairy products (i.e. butter or milk)/**

Paper Products

Not only are paper products compostable, but they contribute to a healthy carbon:nitrogen balance, which is important for food breakdown. They can also help absorb excess moisture in the bucket and make your food waste smell less.

- **Printer Paper:** this can either be ripped up into small strips/squares (think the size of your palm) or shredded.
- **Newspaper:** same as printer paper
- **Amazon's Recyclable Mailers:** same as printer paper
- **Paper Bags:** same as printer paper
- **Envelopes (With Plastic Window Removed):** same as printer paper
- **Carboard (Ripped):** cardboard cannot be shredded in our paper shredder. Therefore, you must cut it up or rip it yourself. Rip it into 2 inch by 2 inch, or smaller, squares (think the size of your palm) then place it in your bucket. Please do not include carboard with a glossy finish.
- **Pizza Boxes (Ripped):** refer to cardboard
- **Egg Carton or Drink Holder (Ripped):** refer to cardboard
- **Coffee Cup Insulators:** refer to cardboard, though most should require little ripping
- **Coffee Filter**
- **Paper Towels:** avoid paper towels with cleaning products on them. The cleaning products can hurt the worms.
- **Tissue Paper**
- **Paper Napkins**
- **Pencil Shavings**
- **Toothpicks**
- **Pencil Shavings**
- **Bamboo Toothbrushes (Bristles Removed):** bristles are made of nylon or high-heat compostable plastic. The head of toothbrush must be cut off with a saw or broken off.

****Reminder: No glossy paper or paper coated in plastic (think milk cartons). Also, no paper towels that have cleaning products on them. We do not accept any type of treated wood.**

Other

- **Coffee grounds**
- **Dead flowers or house plants:** to avoid weed seeds, we do not accept outdoor plants & soil. We do however, accept indoor plants since they have a lower likelihood of carrying weed seeds and being treated with herbicide/pesticide.
- **Paper Tea bags (Remove Staple)**
- **Egg Shells**
- **Hair**
- **Dryer Lint:** please do not include if you dry large amount of polyester or plastic-based fabrics.
- **100% Cotton/Wool Thread or Fabric (Ripped):** please do not include fabrics/thread with polyester or other plastics. Cotton should be ripped into thin strips no more than 1 inch in width.

****Reminder: Contact us if you have more questions at 513-212-6955 or via email at back2thedirt@gmail.com. This list is by no mean comprehensive, and we will keep adding to it as questions arise.**

Cutting Down on Bin Smell

- **Add paper products:** This is one of the best ways to cut down on smells. Shredded paper or paper towels, for instance, works great. They help absorb excess moisture at the bottom of the bin and serve as a carbon source. When carbon (brown material) and nitrogen (green material) are added together, the breakdown process is more balanced—and less smelly.
- **Freeze your food:** Depending on the size of your freezer and the amount of food you produce, freezing your food and adding it to the bin close to pickup can be a viable option to cut down on odors.
- **Make sure the lid is sealed:** Though technically cutting rotting food off from oxygen makes it smell worse, practically you will want to make sure your compost bucket's lid is completely sealed when you are not adding food waste. This will ensure you don't attract flies and should eliminate smells when you are not using the bin.