

# Hilo Coffee Shop Helps Reduce Landfill Waste

By [Leland Kim](#) November 6th

HILO, Hawaii (KHNL) -- Starbucks Coffee gets a lot of credit for its environmentally friendly approach to the coffee business. But during our latest Pride of Hawaii trip, we found a coffee shop in Hilo that one-ups the mainland giant.

Starbucks' cups and napkins are made from recycled paper. But Kope Kope Espresso Cafe in Hilo goes a step further, getting rid of all of its plastic products. This move helps reduce waste in Hawaii landfills.

The smooth sound of local music and the rich aroma of freshly brewed espresso blend to make Kope Kope a popular hang out spot for locals in Hilo.

"The environment is really close and family-like," said Vicki Haili, a Hilo resident and a long-time patron of the cafe. "Everybody knows everybody; talk to random people. It's really laid back and comfortable."

So comfortable, patrons come here to relax and study.

Besides serving up espresso, Kope Kope also gives a lesson in ecology. Recently, management replaced their disposable products with more environmentally friendly ones.

"Our landfill is in the news on a regular basis," said Randy Raphael, Kope Kope's assistant manager. "It's in crisis and we need to do everything we can to make this an enjoyable community to live in for a long time to come."

This may look like a typical plastic cup, but it's actually made from corn sugar, which is biodegradable in a matter of months.

Other products are made from either sugar or potatoes. They are all compostable, meaning they will go back to nature in two to six months.

"If these products go into incineration, they are cleaner burning product," said Jesse Law, founder of Sustainable Island Products, the company that distributes these environmentally friendly products. "It's cleaner burning bio mass, and that's a healthier equation for the air and water again."

This commitment to the environment is part of the reasons why patrons keep coming back.

"We have to be concerned about the environment and doing my small part here is a big thing for me," said Haili.

And Kope Kope said they have to do their part in keeping Hawaii "green."

"I'm committed to this community," said Raphael. "This company is committed to this community, and the community has returned the favor by making it a really wonderful place to be."

And here at Starbucks, they're also doing their part. They recycle coffee grounds as composting material for gardens.

The company that distributes those environmentally friendly products currently only serves the Big Island. It hopes to expand to all the other islands in the near future.