

# The Times-Tribune

## Bring your own reusable cup: supply-chain disruption leads to shortage at Zummo's Cafe coffee shop in Scranton

BY JIM LOCKWOOD STAFF WRITER

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SCRANTON — Zummo's Cafe ran out of 20-ounce plastic cold cups a month ago and 16-ouncers two weeks ago because of supply-chain shortages.

Paper cups for hot coffee may be next, said Lindsay Joyce, general manager of the coffee shop in Green Ridge.

Joyce took to social media last week asking customers to bring in their own reusable drink cups. Their post said:

“As you may already know, we are facing a major cup shortage. Ourselves & our suppliers are doing our very best to get them in, but we truly cannot locate them. We are told this is going to get worse before it gets better (hot cups, lids, etc.). We are kindly encouraging you to BYORC (bring your own reusable cup) and when dining in to use our mugs and glasses.”

For cold drinks, Zummo's has been using generic backyard-party type plastic cups found in grocery stores, and affixed with Zummo's stickers.

At Sheetz stores in Scranton and Dunmore, during at least the past three weeks, touch screens for ordering food warn customers that everything on the menu may not necessarily be available:

“Sorry that we may be out of your go-to favorites today. The nationwide supply struggle is real! We’ve got endless backup options 24/7/365 so explore and discover some new faves.”

They are the latest examples of supply disruptions affecting various products — from aluminum to rubber to bacon, to name a few — and local businesses.

Teri Ooms, executive director of the Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development, a research/analysis think-tank partnership of several colleges and universities in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, cited a combination of factors fueling supply-chain disruptions. Some of those include manufacturing-process backups that began last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, global shipping delays and labor and trucker shortages.

During a recent trip to California, Ooms saw firsthand a microcosm of the overall situation — at least 40 container ships anchored and waiting to be unloaded at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Each ship, holding between 12,000 and 20,000 containers that would take multiple days to offload, floated gridlocked, in part because of insufficient labor at the ports, she said.

“As I understand it, the delays are at the ports all around the world and so that’s one factor causing the (supply chain) problem,” Ooms said.

Even after containers are offloaded, truckers are in short supply and distribution centers also are hurting for workers, she said.

“You can connect the dots going forward and then even backwards into manufacturing” from last year’s shutdowns, she said.

Ooms said she thinks supply disruptions may continue for some time.

“I don’t think we’re going to see an end to this anytime soon and everyone just has to plan accordingly for all types of products and goods,” Ooms said.

Zummo’s also has seen disruptions in some foods, too, including berry fruits, bacon and chicken, but the cup shortage remains the main concern, Joyce said.

The response to Zummo’s BYORC request has been overwhelmingly positive from the shop’s regular customers, who have already made it their practice, Joyce said. If there’s a silver lining, it’s an environmental benefit from reusable cups reducing waste, Joyce said.

“We were told by our suppliers that the hot cups will be next, so I’m trying to stock up and not go through as many as I would with customers bringing in reusable cups,” Joyce said. “I don’t know when it’s going to end. Suppliers don’t know, either. No one knows.”