

Maintaining a Squeaky Clean Operation

Safeguard your patrons and your reputation with proper food-safety guidelines

Just as the image of any business is judged initially on its appearance, the cleanliness of a foodservice operation often reflects the perceived quality of its products. But while restaurants may lose business if their image isn't up to scratch, there are more serious consequences of running an unsanitary operation, including fines, closure or even lawsuits if customers become ill due to contaminated food. And although you may already have safety standards established, unless you have adequate staff training on those guidelines, staff may not be following the correct cooking, cleaning and sanitizing procedures.


- **Check for Freshness:** Ensure staff inspects all foods thoroughly for freshness, both upon receipt and before cooking and serving. All canned goods should be inspected for rust, leaks, dents or bulges, while food products should be checked for expiry date and any unusual odours

or colours. Raw produce must be washed thoroughly before use. Staff should also follow the rule "when in doubt, throw it out" — saving a few pennies isn't worth risking the health of your customers.

- **Avoid Contamination:** Staff must be trained in proper food-handling procedures so that micro-organisms from one food are never allowed to contaminate other foods. For example, raw meat contains dangerous micro-organisms that can be easily transferred to food that is ready to eat. One way to avoid this is to use separate cutting boards for raw and cooked food. Teach staff that even mixing fresh foods with leftovers and preparing excess food ahead of time can cause contamination. Staff must also understand and follow proper hygiene policies and practices, such as frequent hand washing and not touching the surfaces of dishes or utensils.

- **Keep a Safe Temperature:** Food

that is kept, thawed, cooked or reheated at the wrong temperature may also be at risk of contamination. The trick is to make sure food spends the least amount of time possible in the "danger zone" (45 to 140°F), or the point where foods are most at risk. Remember too that foods should be thawed in a microwave, refrigerator or under cold, potable running water — as opposed to being thawed at room temperature — and cooked immediately. Also train staff to only remove food from cold storage that can be prepared within two hours.

- **Prevent Pests:** Keeping a restaurant completely pest-free is a difficult endeavour, but ensuring your staff follows a few simple guidelines will reduce any creepy crawlies. For example, keep all doors closed whenever possible, thereby preventing animals and insects attracted to the smell of food from entering the kitchen. Also make sure staff removes garbage frequently in sealed bags and cans, and keeps the garbage area clean when not in use. 

QUICK CLEANLINESS TIPS

First In, First Out — Use the foods in storage that have been there the longest, thereby helping ensure freshness and reduce the risk of spoilage.

Wash your hands — Post a hand-washing policy on the door of your kitchen to enforce the idea that hand washing will help reduce the risk of contamination.

Safety List — Also keep a list of safety requirements and guidelines posted in the kitchen for quick reference.

Check the Amounts — Ensure staff knows which cleaning products to use for each cleaning duty and in what amounts. Staff should always use measuring tools to check the amounts, and should follow the prescribed guidelines.

Temperature Check — Post a safe temperature list in the kitchen. Also remind staff to always use a thermometer to check the temperature when receiving, cooking and holding hot or cold foods.



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