

Food Safety: Every Employee's Responsibility

Safe food preparation and handling is basic to every foodservice operation. But it never hurts to refresh yourself on current best practices. Revisit the foundations of safe food handling, plus learn management tips that will help keep your operation free of foodborne illness.



Restaurants and other food service establishments are associated with a significant number of foodborne illness outbreaks, although not in disproportion to the number of meals prepared and eaten at home. Safe food preparation and handling in the foodservice environment is an ongoing proposition. The individual principles and procedures are fairly straightforward:

- **Clean** — Wash hands and surfaces often
- **Separate** — Don't cross-contaminate
- **Cook** — Cook to proper temperatures, checking with a food thermometer
- **Chill** — Refrigerate promptly

However, from a management perspective, there's quite a bit more to it. Organizations that are truly committed to food safety have multiple layers of procedures, reporting, and resources in place to ensure that every individual knows what to do.

- Manage employee illness – No one who is known to be sick should be working. This goes double for food handlers or anyone who is in contact with the public. Customers should not be exposed to illness of any kind
- Managers and key employees should undergo food safety training or a certification program
- Consider instituting hazard analysis and critical control points plan. This seven-step approach to identifying and managing food-safety hazards is considered the gold standard for food manufacturing facilities and is being adopted by more foodservice locations as well

This level of engagement also extends outside the four walls to the supplier community and what operators expect of all their vendors.

- Develop purchasing standards and procedures to ensure that all suppliers are safe and meet all requirements for food safety. Additionally, you should:
 - Arrange deliveries so they arrive one at a time, during off-peak hours
 - Have enough trained staff to promptly receive, inspect, and store all deliveries
 - Provide thermometers and train employees on how to use them when carefully inspecting deliveries