

FOOD SAFETY PLAN

The goal of your restaurant's food safety plan is to keep the food that you serve safe. The first step is to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) that address personal hygiene, facility design, supplier selection, cleaning and sanitation, equipment maintenance, and worker food safety training. The next step is to develop food safety procedures that specifically address how you will control the five most common risk factors responsible for foodborne illness. The risk factors, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are:

- *Food from unapproved and unsafe source* – not buying food from regulated food suppliers
- *Improper holding time and temperature* -- keeping food between 41°F (5°C) and 135°F (57°C) for more than four hours
- *Poor personal hygiene* -- workers not washing their hands properly; coughing or sneezing on food; touching or scratching sores, cuts, or boils; and coming to work sick
- *Improper cooking* – not cooking food to recommended internal temperatures
- *Cross-contamination* -- transferring microorganisms from one surface or food to another surface or food

Active Managerial Control

Active managerial control is a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to food safety in your restaurant. Basically it means that you will develop and implement a food safety plan that will keep the food you serve to your customers safe. To do so:

- Identify food safety procedures and SOPs that will keep food safe and sanitary.
- Monitor all procedures to be sure your workers are properly following them. The foodservice manager is responsible for monitoring safe food handling practices that contribute to foodborne illness.
- Verify that procedures are controlling the risk factors.
- Train workers on appropriate SOPs and food safety procedures.

What is HACCP?

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) is a systematic way to identify, evaluate, and control food safety hazards in your establishment. Hazards are biological, chemical, or physical agents that can cause illness or injury if they are not controlled. HACCP prevents food safety hazards rather than reacts to food safety hazards. A HACCP Plan is a written plan that is specific to your establishment's menu, customers, equipment, processes, and operations.

When is a HACCP Plan Required?

Not all restaurants are required to have a HACCP Plan. If you: vacuum package food; serve raw meats; package fresh squeezed orange juice; serve shellfish directly from a tank, or cure or smoke meat to preserve it then you will need to have a HACCP plan. You might need a HACCP Plan to prepare other types of food, such as sushi rice. Your local or state health department will let you know if you need a HACCP Plan for other foods that you serve.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Before one begins to develop a HACCP Plan, standard operating procedures (SOPs) must be in place. SOPs focus on workers, facilities, and equipment. At a minimum, your SOPs should address the following:

- Illness policy
- Cleaning and sanitizing procedures
- Garbage removal
- Pest control
- Facility design and equipment selection
- Worker hygiene

Developing a HACCP Plan

There are seven steps that one walks through to develop a HACCP Plan. Each is discussed in detail below.

1: Conduct a hazard analysis. The hazards associated with a specific menu item are identified. Prepare a flow chart that outlines all handling/preparation steps from receiving to service. List the likely hazards associated with each step. Identify how to prevent the hazards at each step. Hazards can be biological, chemical, or physical. List the hazards that are likely to occur *and* that will cause severe consequences if they are not controlled. Hazards that are low risk and that are not likely do not need to be considered. Examples of hazards are bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

2: Determine CCPs. A control point is any point, step, or procedure where biological, physical, or chemical factors can be controlled. A critical control point (CCP) is a point, step, or procedure where an identified hazard can be prevented, eliminated, or reduced to acceptable levels. Critical control points are monitored much more frequently than are control points. Examples of CCPs are cooking raw meat to eliminate bacteria or keeping cooked rice at proper temperatures to prevent bacterial growth.

3: Establish critical limits. This step involves establishing criteria that must be met to prevent, eliminate, or reduce the identified hazard at the CCP so that the food is safe to eat. Examples of critical limits are temperature, time, water activity, and pH.

4: Establish monitoring procedures. Monitoring is a planned observation or measurement to determine if a CCP is under control. Examples of monitoring include: visual observations, temperature measurements, time assessment, pH measurements, and water activity measurements.

5: Establish corrective actions. Corrective actions focus on what to do when a food does not meet the critical limit. An example of a corrective action is the temperature of a hamburger is 140°F (60°C) after cooking (a CCP). The critical limit is cooking the hamburger to 155°F (68°C) or hotter. To make the hamburger safe, continue cooking the hamburger until it is 155°F (68°C) or hotter. Throwing out food might be a corrective action. Maintain records of all corrective actions taken.

6: *Establish verification procedures.* Four phases of verification are needed for a HACCP Plan. These are: (1) determine that the critical limits at all CCPS are sound, (2) make sure that the establishment's HACCP Plan is being properly implemented, (3) have regulatory personnel review the plan to make sure that it is being properly implemented, and (4) check the accuracy of all monitoring equipment.

7: *Establish record keeping.* The following make up the records of a HACCP Plan:

- List of HACCP team and their assigned responsibilities
- Description of each menu item
- Flow chart for each menu item indicating CCPs
- Hazards associated with each CCP and preventive measures
- Critical limits
- Monitoring procedures
- Corrective actions plans
- Record keeping procedures
- Procedures to verify the HACCP Plan

Managing a Crisis

The basis of a successful crisis management program is a written plan that identifies the resources required and procedures that must be followed to handle crises. Crisis situations include: foodborne illness outbreak, power outage, theft, and fire. All restaurants should have a crisis management plan. At a minimum identify who should be contacted in the event of a crisis and post their telephone numbers in the establishment. All workers should be trained on who should be contacted in the event of a crisis.

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The material in this fact sheet, unless otherwise identified, is based upon work supported by the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under special project number 2003-51110-01715, the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative of the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program. For more information, contact Dr. Angela Fraser at 919-515-9150 or at angela.fraser@ncsu.edu.

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