



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

CROSS CONTAMINATION

A large number of food-borne illnesses are attributed to some form of cross contamination. What is cross contamination?

Cross contamination consists of spreading a contaminated substance from one item, usually another food, to food items that you are preparing to serve. The form of contamination, in the majority of cases, is a bacteria from raw or spoiled foods; however, some chemical substances have been involved in cross contamination cases.

What are some of the most common forms of cross contamination and means of prevention? A few are listed below:

1. Cross Contamination Through IMPROPER STORAGE. Raw foods come in contact with cooked foods or foods ready to go the public. One primary example is raw meats placed on a shelf above prepared produce, such as lettuce, drips into the lettuce. The result is that the customer is served a contaminated salad which will likely result in illness.

TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM

Separate raw and cooked foods in refrigeration units. Place raw foods below cooked or processed foods. Cover or wrap foods with approved food protection devices such as plastic lids, plastic wrap or aluminum. Cloths and paper towels are not approved covers, they only absorb the contaminant and provide a better area for bacterial growth.

2. Cross Contamination through HANDLING of Raw Foods. Workers hands and clothing become contaminated from handling of raw foods such as meats and produce which has not been properly washed. The worker spreads the contamination which is usually a food pathogen, a soil borne bacteria, or pesticide to cooked or processed foods which are ready to serve to customers.

TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM

Have employees wash their hands with hot water and soap after handling raw foods, utensils used for raw foods, or using the restroom.

3. Cross Contamination of EQUIPMENT AND UTENSIL SURFACES. These utensils are then used to prepare foods that are ready to serve to customers. Usually, this consists of using a contaminated knife or meat slicer to cut prepared foods. Other forms of contamination consists of wiping down contaminated areas with cloths and sponges which are then used to wipe down utensils or areas where processed food is being prepared.

TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM

Wash utensils used for raw foods with soap and hot water and then sanitize with a bleach solution of 50 ppm or more chlorine. One capful of bleach for about 4 gallons of water is the proper mixture.

Use separate utensils for raw foods and processed foods. Separate raw food operation areas from cooked, ready to go food operation areas.

Do not use rags that are used to wipe down raw food areas in other areas or processes in the kitchen. A cook should not use a rag to wipe down an area where raw food has been processed and then use that rag to wipe his hands or equipment, such as knives that will then be used to cut processed foods. Rags or towels should be changed frequently in order to reduce the chance of accidental contamination. Different rags should be used for separate processing areas.

REMEMBER, cross contamination, if understood by all employees who serve and handle food, can be prevented. This is part of assuring your customers safe, wholesome food.