



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. In the majority of cases, the contamination comes from bacteria or viruses. However, chemicals, such as cleaners, and physical substances, such as glass or metal shards can also result in cross contamination.

A few of the most common causes of cross contamination and means of prevention are listed below:

1. Cross Contamination Through IMPROPER STORAGE. Raw foods come in contact with cooked foods or foods ready to go to the public. An example is when raw meat is placed on a shelf above prepared produce, such as lettuce, and meat juices drip onto the lettuce. This results in the customer being served a contaminated salad, which will may 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 properly with plastic lids, plastic wrap or aluminum foil. Cloths and paper towels are not approved covers; they absorb moisture and provide a suitable environment for bacterial growth.

2. Cross Contamination through HANDLING of Raw Foods. A worker's hands and/or clothing become contaminated by handling raw foods, such as meat, or unwashed produce. The worker spreads contaminants, such as a microscopic bacteria to food that is then served directly to customers.

TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM

Have employees wash their hands properly with hot water and soap after handling raw foods, utensils used for raw foods, using the restroom or any other task that can contaminate hands.

3. Cross Contamination of EQUIPMENT AND UTENSIL SURFACES. Equipment or utensils such as knives, cutting boards or meat slicers are used to prepare foods raw foods and then that equipment or utensil is used on food served directly to a customer. Cross contamination can also happen by using a wiping cloth or sponge to wipe down a contaminated area and then using the same cloth or sponged to wipe down an area where ready-to-eat food is prepared.

TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM

Wash utensils and food equipment with soap and hot water, and then sanitize with an approved sanitizer, such as a chlorine solution with a minimum concentration of 50 ppm in a dish washing machine or 100 ppm for manual sanitation . Use sanitizer test strips to ensure the proper sanitizer concentration is achieved and maintained in the sanitizing solution.

Use separate utensils for raw foods and ready-to-eat foods. Separate raw food preparation areas from areas where cooked, ready-to-eat foods are prepared.

Do not use wiping cloths used to wipe down areas where raw food is handled in other areas of the kitchen. A food handler should not use a wiping cloth used to wipe down food preparation areas to wipe hands or plates. Reusable wiping cloths must be stored in a sanitizing solution of 100 ppm chlorine when not in use and should be changed frequently.

With proper training, education and guidance, cross contamination can be prevented, allowing you to provide safe, wholesome food to your customers.