

Lakes Food Newsletter



Issue 7/October 10

Welcome.....

..... to issue number 7 of the Lakes Food Newsletter. The busy winter rush is coming to an end and the quieter in-between season time is a good opportunity for a spring clean. Now might also be a good time to sit down and have a closer look at a Food Control Plan. Initially the amount of record keeping and temperature monitoring required by the Plan might seem off putting, but if you get stuck in now it will have all become part of your normal daily practice by the time the summer rush sets in. If you would like to have a look at the Food Control Plan or have any questions please get in touch with us on 450 0300 or enquiries@lakesenv.co.nz

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Hair, hair, everywhere

A common complaint we have received recently is hair in food. This is a relatively easy to solve problem: keep hair tied up or contained by a hat or hairnet.

Bacteria cling to hair and the scalp, surviving on dirt, dandruff and sweat. So hair in food is not just aesthetically unpleasant, but it can also be a source of bacterial contamination. Most people carry a bacterium called *Staphylococcus aureus* on their skin, including their scalp. This bacterium produces a toxin, which if ingested can cause food poisoning.

Not only does containing hair prevent it from falling into food, but it also discourages food handlers from touching their hair and scalp. Tucking hair behind the ears, a quick scratch of the head etc can contaminate hands with bacteria. These sorts of behaviours are often unconscious and it is unrealistic to expect people will wash their hands after each touch, tuck or scratch.

If you are relying on long hair being tied up make sure that this is done properly so that all hair is held by the tie or pinned up. Hats must be clean and suitable—the hat should cover all hair and not just sit on the top of the head. Wearing a beanie or cap that is worn outside of the premises will bring contamination into the kitchen. In fact all clothes worn in the kitchen should be for that purpose only – staff should get changed immediately before commencing work.



Hand washing - again and again and again!

It is really surprising how often we come across wash hand basins that are full of dirty equipment; are dirty; and/or don't have soap or a supply of single-use towels. Despite all the public education and our visits the importance of correct hand washing seems not to have sunk in with some.



Hand washing is the single most effective way of reducing food poisoning from commercial kitchens. A quick rinse under the tap followed by a wipe on a tea towel or apron could be worse than nothing. To remove dirt and bacteria from hands the use of soap is essential. Friction caused when hands are rubbed together dislodges dirt so that it is washed away. Whilst there is limited evidence that water temperature affects how effective hand washing is in removing bacteria and viruses, water that is very cold or too hot will discourage people from taking their time over the process. Areas that are often missed are between fingers and up around the wrist.

Drying removes any dislodged dirt that was not rinsed off hands and removes water that will contain dirt and bacteria from hands. The use of single-serve towels ensures that dirt ends up in the bin and is not transferred to tea-towels, clothing and similar. Bacteria wiped onto cloth towels or clothing can multiply and then re-contaminate hands the next time they are dried, or if

they come in contact with surfaces or food these can be contaminated.

Staff need to learn the habit of washing hands frequently - in-between tasks, when re-entering the kitchen after a break, after using a tissue etc. Everyone entering the kitchen, including your environmental health officer or auditor, should wash their hands. By being a good role model and providing easily accessible, clean tools for hand washing you can assist in forming this habit and improve food safety in your kitchen.

Cracking up

Over the past few months we have received a couple of complaints about pieces of plastic or similar in food. Although such instances don't usually have serious implications, if swallowed pieces of plastic and other materials may cause internal injuries. Cracked containers, chipped colanders or sieves, broken handles on appliances etc can be the source of physical contamination of food.

In addition scratches, cracks, pitting and similar damage mean that items can no longer be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. When cleaning damaged items it is impossible to reach into cracks and the rougher the surface the easier it is for food debris to be left behind.

Bacteria can grow in small crevices, which may lead to bacterial contamination of food.

Generally gluing or taping up cracks or breakages is not a suitable solution; repair is not reliable and the tape itself can become a problem. Items that are damaged should be discarded and replaced to avoid the risk of your food becoming contaminated.



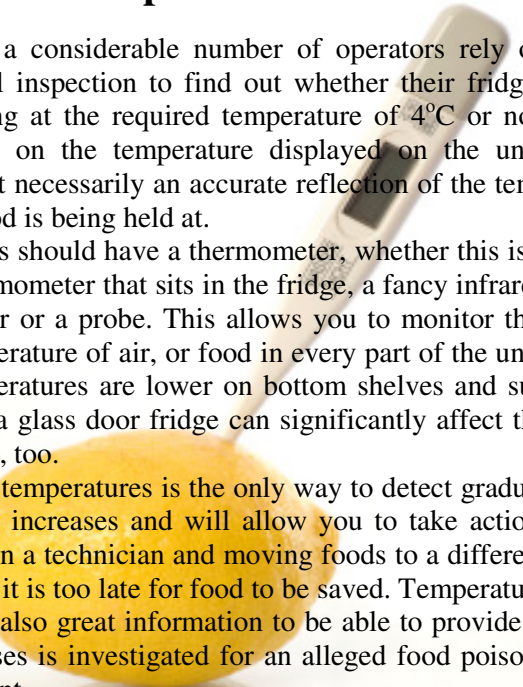
Know your temperatures

Amazingly a considerable number of operators rely on their annual inspection to find out whether their fridges are operating at the required temperature of 4°C or not. Others rely on the temperature displayed on the unit, which is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the temperature food is being held at.

All premises should have a thermometer, whether this is a simple thermometer that sits in the fridge, a fancy infrared thermometer or a probe. This allows you to monitor that actual temperature of air, or food in every part of the unit. Often temperatures are lower on bottom shelves and sun shining on a glass door fridge can significantly affect the temperature, too.

Monitoring temperatures is the only way to detect gradual temperature increases and will allow you to take action, i.e. calling in a technician and moving foods to a different unit, before it is too late for food to be saved. Temperature records are also great information to be able to provide if your premises is investigated for an alleged food poisoning complaint.

When the new Food Control Plans become mandatory temperature monitoring and recording will become mandatory, so now is a good time to get into the habit of writing down daily temperatures for all fridges and display cabinets. That way you will be one step ahead when you come to implement a Food Control Plan.



Cleaning products

To keep your kitchen surfaces and equipment clean and safe you should be using two types of products: detergents and sanitisers. The first breaks down grease and removes dirt and food from surfaces. Sanitisers kill bacteria left behind after the initial cleaning process. Some chemicals available combine detergent and sanitiser in one product, which can be easier to use and reduce the number of chemicals you require.

Many detergents and sanitisers are perfumed or contain toxic chemicals and as a result are not suitable for use in food areas. The NZFSA has an extensive database of commercial cleaning products with information on whether these should be used around food. The database can be searched by specific product, brand etc and is available at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/registers-lists/manual15/index.htm>

Commercial cleaning agents often appear more expensive than supermarket products however, if used correctly they can actually be more cost effective and are certainly more efficient at doing the job. Commercial cleaning agent suppliers will be able to advise you on the best products for your premises, explain how they should be used and will follow-up to ensure that your requirements are being met. Whilst the products may appear expensive they generally need to be diluted for use and will last you for a long time. Using commercial products may reduce the number of chemicals you need down to just two or three for the entire premises.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use chemicals. Following instructions on dilution ratios is essential for chemicals to work effectively. A weak solution may not be sufficient to remove dirt or kill bacteria. Making solutions too strong may be damage equipment and is also wasteful.

Regardless of what chemicals you are using to clean your kitchen it is imperative that cleaning equipment is suitable and clean. Using a dirty cloth will never result in a clean surface. Single-use cloths are ideal, but if you do you multiple-use cloths ensure that these are used only for certain tasks. For example never use a work-surface cloth to wipe up a spillage on the floor. All equipment must be cleaned and dried regularly; cloths should be washed and sanitized at least daily. Mops must be rinsed and hung off the floor, away from food areas

