

Safe Food Storage Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Safe food storage refers to the proper handling, storage, and preservation of food to prevent contamination and maintain its safety, quality, and freshness. This includes using appropriate containers, storing food at the correct temperature, labeling food items, rotating food regularly, and keeping storage areas clean and sanitized. Safe food storage practices are essential in preventing foodborne illnesses and ensuring that food is safe for consumption.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

HAZARDS OF IMPROPER FOOD STORAGE AT RESTAURANTS

Improper food storage in a restaurant can lead to various hazards that can cause foodborne illness, such as:

- **Bacterial growth:** Food that is stored at temperatures that are too warm can promote the growth of harmful bacteria, such as Salmonella and E. coli. This can result in food poisoning and other serious illnesses.
- **Cross-contamination:** When food is stored improperly, there is a risk of cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods, as well as between different types of food. This can result in the transfer of harmful bacteria from one food to another, leading to foodborne illness.
- **Spoilage:** Food that is not stored properly can spoil quickly, leading to waste and financial losses for the restaurant. This can also lead to the growth of mold and other harmful microorganisms that can cause foodborne illness.
- **Chemical contamination:** Improper storage of chemicals, such

as cleaning agents and pesticides, can result in contamination of food and pose serious health risks to customers.

- **Insect and rodent infestation:** Food that is not stored properly can attract insects and rodents, which can contaminate the food and spread disease.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PROPER FOOD STORAGE GUIDELINES FOR RESTAURANTS

- **Temperature control:** Proper temperature control is critical to preventing the growth of harmful bacteria. Keep hot foods at 140°F (60°C) or above and cold foods at 40°F (4°C) or below.
- **Separation:** Store raw meats and poultry separately from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination. Use separate cutting boards, utensils, and containers for each.
- **Labeling:** Label all containers with the contents, date of preparation, and use-by date. First in, first out (FIFO) rotation ensures that older items are used first.
- **Cleanliness:** Keep storage areas clean and dry to prevent the growth of bacteria. Clean and sanitize all surfaces regularly.
- **Proper packaging:** Use airtight containers or seal to keep foods fresh and prevent contamination.
- **Storage location:** Store food in designated areas away from chemicals, cleaning supplies, and other potential sources of contamination.
- **Use food-grade containers:** Use containers that are specifically designed for food storage to prevent contamination. Avoid reusing containers that previously held non-food items.
- **Store food in appropriate areas:** Store raw meats separately from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination. Use separate storage areas for each type of food.
- **Rotate food regularly:** Use the “first in, first out” method to ensure that older food items are used first. This prevents food from spoiling and reduces waste.

SAFE FOOD STORAGE TEMPERATURE MONITORING FOR RESTAURANTS

FIFO! First In First Out. This rule means that items in storage should be used in the order they were put in. When you receive a delivery, new stock should be placed behind existing stock. This practice isn't always the easiest to do but makes doing so an innate practice. FIFO reduces waste because you will have less food run past its expiration date. Use the stock at the front to always make use of the oldest products first. Train your employees to track the expiration dates of goods in storage. Teach and stress the importance of using goods before their best by date for optimal safety and quality.

Keep Storage Dark and Dry. Dark storage maximizes the storage time of perishables. Whether it's goods in dry storage or products in a cool storage such as a refrigerator or freezer, ideal conditions are always out of direct light, especially sunlight. Proper lighting and lighting control ensures stable temperatures and food quality.

Storage Based on Cooking Temperature. The temperature at which you cook foods should determine which shelf you store them on in the refrigerator. Foods that are cooked at lower temperatures should be stored on a higher shelf. Foods that are ready to eat, eaten raw, or already cooked should stay on the top shelf, and be wrapped tightly to prevent cross-contamination.

PREVENT CROSS-CONTAMINATION

All employees should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and warm water (at least 110° F, or 44° C) for a minimum of 30 seconds when handling food. Gloves should also be worn at all times to protect food from contaminants. Never use the same cutting board for raw meats as you do for ready-to-eat foods. Always use a cooking thermometer to cook food to its proper internal temperature, depending on what type of food it is.

WHY PROPER FOOD STORAGE IS ESSENTIAL IN A RESTAURANT

Food safety: Food storage plays a critical role in preventing foodborne illnesses caused by harmful bacteria, viruses, and other

microorganisms that can grow on food.

Food quality: Proper storage also helps maintain the quality and freshness of food. Storing food at the correct temperature and in appropriate containers helps to preserve its flavor, texture, and appearance.

Cost savings: Good food storage practices can help reduce food waste and save money for the restaurant. When food is stored correctly, it lasts longer, reducing the need to throw away spoiled or expired food.

Compliance with regulations: Food storage is an important aspect of compliance with food safety regulations. Restaurants must follow strict guidelines on how to store and handle food to ensure that they are meeting health and safety standards.

FINAL WORD

Overall, proper food storage is crucial for maintaining food safety, quality, and compliance with regulations in a restaurant. It is essential to ensure that customers are served safe and delicious food and that the restaurant avoids costly fines or legal action.