

OS/05: Preparation of food

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Cross-contamination is defined as the “transference of harmful bacteria from a source to a high-risk food”. During the preparation of food if control measures are inadequate there is the potential for cross-contamination, whether it is direct or indirect.

1.2 Direct cross-contamination occurs when harmful bacteria are transferred from a ‘source’ to a high-risk food. Examples of ‘sources’ are:

- raw foods (meat, poultry, vegetables, fruit and eggs);
- humans (food handlers & non-food handlers);
- food pests (animals);
- contaminated water, air, dust & dirt.

1.3 Indirect cross-contamination occurs when harmful bacteria are transferred from a ‘source’ to a high-risk food via a ‘vehicle of infection’. Some examples of ‘vehicles of infection’ are:

- hands;
- cleaning cloths;
- chopping boards, work surfaces and knives;
- door handles (refrigerators, freezers); and
- taps (hand basins, sinks).

2.0 Prevention of cross-contamination

2.1 To eliminate the risk of cross-contamination the effective separation of raw and cooked foods must be implemented throughout all stages of food preparation. Where adequate workspace allows such preparation must take place in designated areas, using the correct colour-coded equipment.

2.2 Where workspace does not allow for total segregation of raw and cooked foods, but using the correct colour-coded equipment an effective cleaning and disinfection regime must be implemented, managed and recorded at regular intervals.

2.3 Where food is to be tasted this must be carried out using a clean spoon, spoons must be replaced or cleaned effectively before food is tasted again.

2.4 The handling of ready-to-eat foods must be kept to a minimum to prevent contamination from dirty and/or unwashed hands.

3.0 Washing of foodstuffs

3.1 All salad items, fresh spices, non-peel-able fruit and vegetables, especially if they are to be eaten raw must be washed effectively in clean, cold potable water, prior to preparation. However where the appropriate environmental health authority requires that such items are washed and sanitised with an appropriate sanitising solution then this must be carried out.

SECTION 2 - OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

4.0 Colour-coded chopping boards and knives* (where applicable*)

- 4.1 To eliminate the risk of cross-contamination a system for the use of colour-coded chopping boards must be implemented.
- 4.2 The following colour-coded system for chopping boards and knives has been identified as the adopted practice within food preparation areas:
- red - raw meat;
 - blue - raw fish;
 - yellow - cooked meats & cooked fish;
 - green - washed salad items;
 - brown - vegetables; and
 - white - bread and dairy products.
- 4.3 Chopping boards and knives must be cleaned and disinfected after each and every use.
- 4.4 Where chefs' personal knives are used these must always be appropriate to the task in hand, kept in a good state of repair, cleaned and disinfected after each and every use.
- 4.5 Receptacles' used for the storage of knives must always be kept clean and tidy.

5.0 Fabrication of surfaces and equipment

- 5.1 All equipment and food preparation surfaces that come into contact with food must be in a good state of repair, clean and of food-grade quality.
- 5.2 Equipment and food preparation surfaces may be classed as food-grade quality if they are free from crevices, cracks or corners in which dust and food debris may accumulate, impervious to water and can be cleaned and disinfected effectively.

6.0 Cleanliness of food preparation surfaces

- 6.1 All hand-contact and food-contact surfaces must be included in the daily cleaning schedule.
- 6.2 Surfaces must be cleaned prior to and after use with the appropriate sanitiser.
- 6.3 When sanitising equipment and surfaces extra care and attention must be paid to any awkward areas that may harbour dirt and bacteria, for example:
- vacuum packing machines;
 - slicing machine blades;
 - can opener blade; and
 - under ledges to preparation tables and equipment.

7.0 Personal hygiene

- 7.1 Food handlers must observe and follow all requirements of the relevant procedures on hand washing, personal hygiene and reporting of illness whilst taking food handling duties. Refer to **Section 7 - Fitness to Work**.

SECTION 2 - OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

8.0 Polypropylene gloves

- 8.1 If polypropylene gloves are worn they must be changed at regular intervals and must not be deemed as a substitution for the regular and effective washing of hands.
- 8.2 Gloves must be changed in between tasks, upon which hands must be washed.

9.0 Time and temperature limitations

- 9.1 Food must not be prepared too far in advance as this may give rise to growth of micro-organisms, therefore should be prepared as near to service time as possible.
- 9.2 Food must not be kept in the temperature 'Danger Zone' (5°C - 63°C) for extended periods of time as this may promote the growth of micro-organisms.
- 9.3 Food must be prepared as quickly as possible and then refrigerated or cooked. Where a large volume of food needs to be prepared prior to cooking then the preparation of small batches of food should be considered with the remainder stored in a temperature controlled environment until required.

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