

THE CENTRAL KITCHEN

A publication of Central Michigan District Health Department



Ensuring Food Safety: A Step-by-Step Guide to Washing Produce

Ensuring that all produce is washed as the initial step in food preparation is critical, whether the items are to be cooked or served raw. This practice is important for all produce, including organic varieties, to remove dirt, bacteria, and pesticide residues from the surface.

Even organic produce can harbor microorganisms that may pose a risk if ingested. Thorough washing helps reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses caused by pathogens such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Listeria* ([ScienceAlert](#)), while also eliminating chemical residues from pesticides and fertilizers and removing wax or preservatives applied to extend shelf life ([The Conversation](#)).

For the safest results, follow these steps:

- **Hand Hygiene:** Wash your hands before and after handling fresh produce by scrubbing with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- **Inspect Produce:** Carefully inspect all produce for damage or bruising, and trim away any affected areas before preparing or consuming.

- **Pre-Peel Rinse:** Rinse produce before peeling it to prevent transferring dirt and bacteria from your knife into the fruit or vegetable. This step is especially important for melons.
- **Rinse Thoroughly:** Gently rub each item under plain, running water. Avoid using soap or specialized produce washes. It is recommended to use cool water, as warm water may cause the produce to absorb unwanted substances ([University of Minnesota Extension](#)).
- **Scrubbing Firm Produce:** For firm items such as melons and cucumbers, use a clean vegetable brush to scrub the surface ([FDA](#)).
- **Drying:** Dry the produce with a paper towel to further reduce any lingering bacteria ([FDA](#)).
- **Leafy Greens:** Remove the outermost leaves from heads of lettuce or cabbage to ensure that only the cleanest parts are consumed.

By incorporating these practices, you can significantly improve food safety and enjoy the authentic taste of your produce with greater confidence.

Guidelines: Service Animals in Food Establishments

Food service establishments are increasingly encountering dogs on the premises. Under Section 6-501.115 of the Michigan Modified Food Code, animals are generally restricted in businesses that sell, prepare, or serve food. However, an exception is made for service animals that are controlled by individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

A service animal is defined as a dog or miniature horse that has been trained to perform tasks that mitigate its handler's disability. Common examples include guiding individuals who are blind, reminding a person with memory impairment to take medication, alerting someone with diabetes to low blood sugar, or signaling an impending seizure for someone with epilepsy.

Unlike service animals, other assistance animals -- such as those providing emotional support -- are not required to be admitted into establishments covered by the ADA. A service animal is not considered a pet.

If it is not immediately clear what task a service animal performs, food establishments are permitted to ask two questions:



1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

If the handler does not identify the animal as a service animal, does not specify its trained task, or identifies the animal as an emotional support, companion, or therapy animal, then the animal should not be allowed in the establishment. Allowing a non-service animal would be a violation of Michigan Modified Food Code section 6-501.115.

For further guidance, a poster detailing these requirements is available at michigan.gov.

Preventing Pest Infestations in Food Establishments

Establishments in the food industry can attract pests for a couple of key reasons: they offer a warm, dry shelter and provide ready access to food and water, which is appealing to both rodents and insects.

How to Limit Pest Issues

- **Secure Entrances:** Ensure that all exterior doors are properly sealed. A well-sealed door should not reveal any outside light when closed.
- **Maintain Door Integrity:** Avoid propping open doors, particularly during the hot summer months when kitchens can become quite warm. Refrain from leaving screenless windows open to minimize entry points for pests.
- **Implement a Pest Control Plan:** Either develop your own pest control strategy or engage a third-party service to manage pest prevention. Consistent monitoring and action can prevent infestations before they become a major problem.

- **Encourage Employee Communication:** Establish clear lines of communication with staff to ensure that any signs of rodent or insect activity are reported promptly and addressed immediately.
- **Practice Proper Food Storage:** Store all food items in sealed bags, packages, and containers. Keep food storage areas dry, ensure that food is not left on the floor, and clean up any spills quickly to reduce available food sources for pests.

How to Recognize a Pest Issue

- **Rodent Droppings:** Finding rodent droppings is a key indicator of a pest issue. Note that a single mouse can produce 50-75 droppings per day, so the presence of many droppings does not always mean multiple mice are present.
- **Chew Marks:** Check for chew marks on boxes and bags, as these are common signs of rodent activity.
- **Dusty Tracks:** Look for tracks on dusty surfaces, such as pipes, which can suggest pest movement.
- **Fly Infestation Indicators:** Egg deposits and larvae in moist areas are signs of a potential fly infestation.



References

1. How Flies Impact Food Safety and What You Can Do About It. Ecowize
2. How To Get Rid of Mice. Pests.org

Use Effective Handwashing Practices for Food Safety

Proper handwashing routines are essential in the food industry for preventing the transfer of bacteria and viruses from individuals to food. Insufficient employee hygiene is a significant risk factor for foodborne illness. The recommended procedure is to use warm water and soap, scrub thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, and dry hands with a disposable paper towel.

According to Section 2-301.14 of the Michigan Modified Food Code, employees must wash their hands in the following situations:

- After touching bare human body parts (other than clean hands and arms)
- After using the restroom
- After eating or drinking
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils
- During food preparation to avoid cross-contamination
- When switching from handling raw food to ready-to-eat foods
- Before donning gloves

It is also important to note where handwashing should occur. Section 2-301.15 of the Michigan Modified Food Code specifies that handwashing must be conducted at an assigned sink dedicated solely for that purpose -- not at a sink used for food preparation or ware washing. Employees should be aware of the designated handwashing stations within their establishment.

Each handwashing station must be equipped with:

- A supply of hand cleaning liquid, powder, or bar soap
- Warm water
- Disposable towels for drying hands
- A waste receptacle for used towels



By consistently following these handwashing practices, food establishments can greatly reduce the risk of food contamination and help prevent foodborne illnesses.

Food Safety Reminders

- **Wash your hands often!**
- **Avoid bare-hand contact** with ready-to-eat foods.
- **Cook foods to the correct temperatures.** Use a food thermometer!
- **Keep hot foods HOT - at 135°F or above.**
- **Keep cold foods COLD - at 41°F or below.**
- **Avoid the Danger Zone -** keep foods out of the 41°F to 135°F range.
- **Wash, rinse, and sanitize** food contact surfaces regularly.

CMDHD Offers Food Manager Certification

CMDHD provides certified food manager training to help you comply with the Michigan Food Law.

Every food facility is required to have at least one manager who has passed the Food Protection Manager Certification exam, and remember, these certifications expire every five years and must be renewed.

For details on the next available class, please call us at 989-314-7570. Additionally, online courses from various providers are available -- just ensure the program is accredited by the American National Standards Institute.

For further information, please visit the [Michigan Department of Agriculture website](#).

Maintaining a Clean Kitchen: Best Practices for Food Establishments



Keeping both the establishment and the kitchen spotless is essential in any food service operation. A clean environment not only reduces the risk of cross-contamination and foodborne illnesses but also enhances employee morale and supports a positive reputation among customers. Food debris and standing water can attract pests, so a consistent cleaning routine is critical.

Cleaning vs. Sanitizing

It's important to understand that cleaning and sanitizing are two distinct processes:

- **Cleaning** involves removing contaminants such as grease and soil from surfaces. This is typically done by scraping and rinsing with water, followed by washing with detergent. For immovable surfaces, a wet, soapy cloth is often used.
- **Sanitizing** follows cleaning and aims to reduce the number of bacteria to safe levels. Although sanitizing doesn't eliminate all bacteria, it significantly lowers the risk of contamination. This can be achieved using methods such as:
 - Running items through a dishwasher with EPA-approved bleach or quaternary ammonium sanitizers (water must be at least 110°F per FDA guidelines).
 - Immersion in hot water maintained above 171°F.

- For fixed surfaces, applying an EPA-approved sanitizer with a cloth after cleaning and rinsing.

Cleaning Frequency

Different areas and equipment require different cleaning schedules:

- **Food-Contact Surfaces:** Items such as knives, cutting boards, and grill tops should be cleaned:
 - Before using them with different raw animal products.
 - When switching from handling raw foods to ready-to-eat foods.
 - Whenever there's a risk of contamination.

In settings like self-serve buffets, utensils should be cleaned at least every four hours to minimize cross-contamination.

- **Nonfood-Contact Surfaces:** Areas such as walls, floors, shelves, and ventilation systems do not directly touch food but must still be cleaned regularly to prevent dust, grease, and soil buildup, which can eventually contribute to contamination.

Training Employees

Every team member should be well-trained in both cleaning and sanitizing protocols. Developing a cleaning checklist or schedule and assigning specific roles helps ensure that each area is cleaned at the appropriate frequency. Regular audits and retraining sessions are important to maintain high standards. In addition, ensuring that employees follow proper handwashing procedures is key to preventing food contamination.

References

- BVPPH Newsletter to our Food. Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health, Feb. 2024.
- Finnerty, Sarah. *The 4 Types of Food Contamination*. Dycem, Oct. 12, 2023.
- *How to Use a Three-Compartment Sink to Promote Food Safety*. Trust 20, Nov. 18, 2024.
- *Maintaining a Cleaning Schedule*. StateFoodSafety, Aug. 2016.
- 2009 Food Code. FDA, Oct. 1, 2012.



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