

BEST PRACTICES

HANDLING FRESH PRODUCE

Fresh fruits and vegetables are a tasty source of health-giving vitamins and nutrients. But if not handled properly, they can become a source of ill health for your customers and a food safety risk for your restaurant.

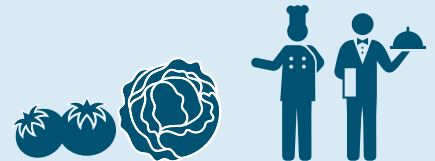
IN FACT,

of the estimated **48 million cases** of **foodborne illness** a year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **attributes 46 percent to fresh produce**, making it the most hazardous of all food categories!¹

Produce is AT RISK FOR CONTAMINATION

...at any point on its journey from the **farm to your restaurant**. And because it is often served uncooked, there is no single, surefire step a kitchen staff can take to mitigate the risk of produce-related foodborne illness. As a result, **food safety of leafy greens, vegetables and fruit requires extra care.**

FOOD CONTAMINATED...



AT ITS SOURCE

AT THE RESTAURANT

KNOW YOUR SUPPLIER



Knowing how the produce you serve is **grown, handled, harvested, washed, cooled, sorted, packaged** and **transported** is vital because the risk of contamination can begin early in the supply chain.



- **Get to know your suppliers** and enlist the services of a knowledgeable food safety expert to evaluate them for their use of **GAPs (Good Agricultural Practices)**.² If you receive produce from a processing plant, make sure the plant uses the same rigorous validation steps with its suppliers.
- **Inspect delivery trucks** to ensure they are sanitary (free of dirt, garbage and old produce) and properly refrigerated (at 41°F or below).¹
- Make sure all **produce is dated** - and has not expired.
- **Examine the produce** itself. Does it appear rotted or excessively bruised? If so, don't be afraid to reject the delivery if you are not satisfied with the condition of the produce, the truck or the hygiene of the driver.

¹ <http://www.ecolab.com/presentation/ecolab-food-safety-webinar-june-2013/>
² <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp>

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TRAIN YOUR STAFF IN BEST PRACTICES

Once fresh produce is delivered, your kitchen staff plays a lead role in preventing the growth and spread of any harmful pathogens that may have arrived with it - and following steps to prevent contamination on site. Teach your staff to adhere to these practices:

1 PROPER HAND WASHING



- Instruct employees to **wash their hands** thoroughly with soap and potable water - **before and after** handling produce.
- **Do not allow sick employees** to handle produce.
- Train employees with wounds to dress them with **colored bandages** (to prevent them from falling into food undetected).

2 STORE PRODUCE PROPERLY



- **Refrigerate** fresh-cut and whole, perishable produce at a temperature of **41°F or below**.
- **Store produce** that will be eaten raw **separately from raw meat**, poultry and seafood. Place on a **higher refrigerator shelf** - never below meats, where juices may drip and inadvertently contaminate the produce.
- Be sure to **label and date** fresh-cut produce before you refrigerate it.

3 WASH AND PREPARE PRODUCE FOLLOWING THESE STEPS



- Before beginning to prepare produce, **wash, rinse and sanitize all surfaces** including sinks, cutting boards, knives and slicers. If equipment is in continuous use, take time to clean and re-sanitize it every four hours.
- **Thoroughly wash all produce**. The only exception is pre-washed leafy greens. If “washed,” “pre-cleaned” or “triple-washed” appear on the label of a sealed package of greens, there’s no need to re-wash. However, if the bag has been opened, washing is recommended. Antimicrobial fruit and vegetable treatments approved by both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can be used to wash both whole and fresh cut produce.
- When **soaking produce**, the water temperature should be **10°F warmer than the pulp temperature** (or at least 51°F).
- For produce such as potatoes and cucumbers with a **tough rind or peel**, use a **dedicated brush** to scrub the surface under potable water and dislodge soil and pathogens from the surface.
- When washing, inspect produce for **signs of rotting and bruising**. Either cut these areas out or discard the produce.
- If using **EPA registered and/or FDA cleared antimicrobial treatment** to wash produce, be sure to follow the manufacturer’s directions. Know how often the chemical **needs to be refreshed** and whether it loses effectiveness in the presence of organic soil. Work with your chemical supplier for the best results.

Safeguarding fresh produce from contamination is one of the biggest food safety challenges you face. By knowing your suppliers, training your kitchen staff and insisting they adhere to best practices for produce handling, you can meet the challenge. Your customers will be glad you did.

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