

Food Safety Fact Sheet

Preventing Contamination in Food Bars

INTRODUCTION

Food bars are popular because they provide a variety of healthy foods. School nutrition employees play an important role in food safety during the preparation, serving, and storing of the food.

HERE ARE THE FACTS

Food used for food bars can become contaminated, either unintentionally or intentionally. One way unintentional contamination occurs is when bacteria or viruses are transferred from one surface to another (cross contamination). For example, if a customer had a virus on her hand, it could be transferred to the handle of a serving spoon and then transferred to the hands of the next customer who used the spoon. Another way unintentional contamination occurs is when an allergen is accidentally transferred from a food containing an allergen to a food that does not contain the allergen. For example, if a spoon from an allergen containing ingredient was placed into an allergen-free food.

Intentional contamination is the willful intent to contaminate a food. While this rarely happens, it can occur.

APPLICATION

School nutrition employees can prevent contamination at food bars by preparing the food bars properly and by monitoring how the food bars are used by customers.

Preparing the Food Bar

- Follow personal hygiene and handwashing Standard Operating Procedures.
- Wear gloves for handling ready-to-eat foods such as fresh apples.
- Place all exposed food under sneeze guards.
- Provide an appropriate clean and sanitized utensil for each container on the food bar.
- Change utensils at each meal period or when they are contaminated.
- Keep labeled and wrapped allergen-free foods in an isolated location until ready to give to that child.
- Replace existing containers of food with new containers when replenishing the food bar.
- Assist customers who are unable to properly use utensils.
- Store eating utensils with handles up or in a manner to prevent customers from touching the food contact surfaces.

Monitoring the Food Bar

- Place all exposed food under sneeze guards.
- Provide an appropriate clean and sanitized utensil for each container on the food bar.
- Change utensils at each meal period or when they are contaminated.
- If an allergen-free food comes into contact with an allergen, do not serve that food to a child with food allergies.





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- Replace existing containers of food with new containers when replenishing the food bar.
- Assist customers who are unable to properly use utensils.
- Store eating utensils with handles up or in a manner to prevent customers from touching the food contact surfaces.

What should you do if you observe these actions?

- Remove and discard contaminated food.
- Demonstrate to customers how to properly use utensils.
- Replace contaminated serving utensil with a clean and sanitized one.
- Clean and sanitize food bar surfaces.
- If cross contact has been observed or if there are concerns that cross contact may have occurred, do not feed that food to a child with food allergies.

Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.

References

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