Food Safety in Catering

Implementation of FSMS in catering process.

A BSI white paper
Executive summary

The catering industry is one of the fastest growing segments in the food chain.

‘The global catering services market stood at $130 billion in 2018 and is projected to grow at a CAGR of more than 6% during the forecast period to cross $205 billion by 2024, on account of increasing emphasis on the adoption of technology to improve customer experience and reduction in the time spent waiting for food.

Whether it’s contract or non-contract catering, catering focuses on food. The conversation between providers and clients are often menu-oriented; what will guests, patrons or patients be served? What should be just as commonly addressed is the safety of the food being served. With its projected growth, many regulatory agencies are now placing extra focus on food safety in the catering industry.

This white paper highlights some key aspects of the contaminants (food safety hazards) and their control in the catering industry.
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Introduction

The principle function of food safety is to prevent contaminants from entering the food chain as ingredients and commodities move from the farm to the fork. Food safety hazards can occur at any stage of the food chain, so safe food depends on the combined efforts of all the people who grow, produce, prepare and sell food.

Contaminants vary but can be broken down into three groups:

- Biological pathogens that (bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa, parasites)
- Chemical (pesticides, agricultural chemicals, preservatives, cleaning agents)
- Physical foreign bodies (stones, plastic, glass, jewellery)
- Allergens that produce a negative immune response for some consumers (eggs, shellfish, nuts, dairy, etc)

The globalization of the food supply chain has meant that caterers can offer consumers food from all over the world. But, the further food travels and the more people or organizations that come in contact with it, the greater the risk of contamination. Ensuring that the food served by caterers is more complex than it ever has been, making the diligence of those handling and preparing it more important.

Allergens have become a very serious topic across the food industry. If a consumer is fed the wrong ingredient, it can cause death. This makes it very important that allergy-related ingredients are properly labelled, stored and prepared before service and that cooked dishes containing them are clearly labelled on packaging or during table or buffet-style service. Key allergens include: gluten, soya, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, crustaceans, fish, milk and milk products, sesame, sulphites, mustard, molluscs and lupin. It is very important to ask about food allergies when planning menus or taking orders.
Food safety in the catering industry is a top priority as catering process belongs among the high-risk processes where contamination may spread easily and impact business and brand image. The catering process involves many steps where the introduction of contaminants can easily happen:

- **Raw Material** - Catering establishments work with a number of raw materials including things like fruits and vegetables, meats, fish, dairy products, eggs, and other perishable items. All of these can be a source of hazards like pesticides/agricultural chemicals, antibiotics, pathogens, adulterants, growth hormones. This makes it very important that suppliers are very carefully reviewed before getting approved. Beyond dirt/dust, when appropriate, it's also important to wash raw materials thoroughly to remove biological pathogens. Finally, raw materials must be stored at the appropriate temperature to prevent contamination.

- **Sanitary Preparation** - Like many other types of safe food preparation, catering also requires good hygiene practices. Standard procedures like hand washing, use of sanitizers, use of gloves where necessary, proper protective clothing (hair nets, masks etc.) are important to achieve this objective. Surfaces and tools must also be cleaned very carefully during preparation and serving to avoid cross contamination and/or pathogens.

- **Cooking** - Cooking food properly helps to avoid food poisoning. Most raw foods feature food-borne pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, parasites that can seriously harm and kill a human being. Cooking food thoroughly to the right temperature is the only way to ensure microorganisms are destroyed and food is safe to consume.

- **Transport** - Maintaining hygiene and preventing cross contamination is very challenging in moving vehicles. It is critical to maintain the appropriate food temperature, hot or cold, during transport as even a difference of four degrees centigrade can encourage the growth of microbial organisms. The vehicle must also be clean, covered and insulated as well as suitable for the time and/or distance to be travelled.

- **Temperature** - During preparation, proper temperature must be maintained at all times; preferably below 15 degrees centigrade. Regulatory requirements in India suggest that hot food to be held at 65 degrees centigrade and cold food below 5 degrees centigrade. During prep and service, there are various types of equipment that can help ensure food is kept at the right temperature (heat lamps, ice baths) and various types of thermometers to monitor temperature throughout both preparation and service.

- **Allergens** - Allergens have become a very serious topic across the food industry. If a consumer is fed the wrong ingredient, it can cause death. This makes it very important that allergy-related ingredients are properly labelled, stored and prepared before service and that cooked dishes containing them are clearly labelled on packaging or during table or buffet-style service. Key allergens include: gluten, soya, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, crustaceans, fish, milk and milk products, sesame, sulphites, mustard, molluscs, and lupin. It is very important to ask about food allergies when planning menus or taking orders.
Using HACCP in catering

HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. It’s a proactive system of assuring food safety through the proactive identification and control of food safety hazards in food operations. HACCP requirements provide a systematic methodology to effectively identify and manage food safety risks.

Developing a HACCP system involves carefully reviewing all the processes you have in place to create your product and then identifying where the critical control points (CCPs) might happen. CCPs are the points of your process(es) (e.g., cleaning of work stations between preparation of different product) where, if proper procedures aren’t followed, the final product could be dangerous for the end consumer.

Some catering businesses will do a HACCP plan for each menu they create. This is more often seen by catering companies that support one-off events. Organizations can streamline the process by clustering similar menu items to reduce the number of HACCP studies (e.g. salads, baked goods, hot food, cold food, etc.)

Effective hazard control: Pre-requisite programmes

For HACCP controls to be successful, good pre-requisite programmes (PRPs) must be in place. These can include:

- Infrastructure control
- Equipment and utensils
- Maintenance
- Pest control
- Cleaning and sanitation
- Incoming material inspection
- Testing programs for raw material and finished products as per pre-defined schedule
- Personal hygiene
- Storage and transport provisions, cross contamination prevention
- Allergens

Both Indian regulations and the Codex guidelines provide reference to PRPs that can be applied in catering.

Training is an important part of food safety in the catering industry. When food service workers understand how controlling hazards helps to reduce risk and how risks can be controlled, food safety increases. Effective training ensures that all personnel, from preparation and service to procurement and storage, have the knowledge and the skills to support a well implemented and maintained HACCP plan.

In conclusion, food safety is critical to your business. Not only does it help protect your customers, it also safeguards your business and your brand.

Food safety in today’s scenario is not only critical for consumer health but is also of paramount importance to a catering Food business in terms of business reputation and resilience.
Why BSI?

The food industry impacts every person on the planet. Though what the world’s population may eat may differ depending on the geography, wealth, age, gender and availability of goods, no other sector plays such a vital role in all of our day-to-day lives and culture. Economically, food represents 10% of Global GDP (valued at US$ 48 trillion by the World Bank). But the food sector also faces significant challenges. Each year, food-borne illness makes one in ten people ill and is the cause of death for millions around the world. Population growth projections and an increasing middle class suggest that the demand for food will increase 70% by 2050. Consumers are increasingly conscious about what goes into their food, how it’s made, its impact on ecosystems and where it comes from.

BSI believes the world deserves food that is safe, sustainable and socially responsible. We support the food sector by developing and publishing standards of best practice, supply chain solutions as well as training and certification to not only the most popular food safety standards, but other business improvement standards that work together to make organizations more resilient. Working in 172 countries, we pride ourselves on the expertise, integrity and professionalism of our people. Our mission is to help our 80,000 clients, ranging from high-profile global brands to small local companies, survive and prosper in today’s world.

Our products and services

**Knowledge**

The core of our business centres is based on the knowledge that we create and impart to our clients. In the standards arena we continue to build our reputation as an expert body, bringing together experts from industry to shape standards at local, regional and international levels. In fact, BSI originally created eight of the world’s top 10 management system standards.

**Assurance**

Independent assessment of the conformity of a process or product to a particular standard ensures that our clients perform to a high level of excellence. We train our clients in world-class implementation and auditing techniques to ensure they maximize the benefits of standards.

**Compliance**

To experience real, long-term benefits, our clients need to ensure ongoing compliance to a regulation, market need or standard so that it becomes an embedded habit. We provide a range of services and differentiated management tools which help facilitate this process.

For more information on improving your organization’s Food Safety practices

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