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 segment in the Food Chain and with the advent of Global Tourism and medical tourism, this industry has received a boom.

One of the foremost considerations of the catering industry is the Food served to the people / patients and inevitably, the question comes to mind as how the safety of the food is maintained is and who is accountable. The regulatory agencies of various countries are also laying emphasis on this aspect as one of their top priorities.

In the whitepaper we have highlighted some key aspects of the contaminants (food safety hazards) and their control in the Catering Industry.
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Food safety is related to the presence of food safety hazards commonly called as food contaminants like presence of foreign body, pathogens, non-food chemicals like pesticides at the time of consumption by the consumer. As the introduction of food safety hazards can occur at any stage of the food chain (farm to fork), adequate control throughout the food chain is essential. Food safety is ensured through the combined efforts of all the processes by which food is grown or produced, sold, and eventually consumed.

Presence of Hazards either Biological known as pathogens which cause harm to consumers examples are Bacteria, Virus, Fungus, Protozoa, parasites), Chemical contaminants (Pesticides, Agricultural Chemicals, Preservatives, cleaning agents ) or Physical mainly foreign body contaminants (stones, plastic, glass, jewellery) or allergens in food items can render the food unsafe for consumption by consumers. Food Safety is an assurance that Food Safety hazards has been proactively controlled or reduced to an acceptable levels and will not cause adverse health effects to consumers.

With the increase in Global business and connectivity, food items have a much bigger export market than ever before. This although increases accessibility of Food to consumers, also exposes the Food items to greater risk of contamination, adulteration and sabotage.
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** - Any catering establishment has to work with a number of raw materials ranging from raw fruits / vegetables to raw meat, fish, dairy products, eggs and other perishable raw materials. Raw materials can be a source of a number of hazards like Pesticides and agricultural chemicals, antibiotics, pathogens, adulterants, growth hormones from raw vegetables and fruits, meat, fish, dairy products. Adequate control of raw material is of paramount importance in this industry. Proper washing of raw materials and subsequent storage in addition to getting raw materials through assured and approved suppliers is a way to deal with the hazards.

- **Sanitary Preparation** - Preparing food for catering is no different than preparing food at any food industry. The key to ensure safety of the food and avoid any cross contamination or cross contact during preparation of food is maintenance of strict food sanitation. Standard procedures like hand washing, use of sanitizers, use of gloves where necessary, proper protective clothing of the food handlers including hair nets and masks are important to achieve this objective.

- **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 ensures that all the microorganisms are destroyed, which make food safe for human consumption.

- **Transport of Food** - This is a very critical area in catering business where maintenance of hygiene and prevention of cross contamination during transport of food becomes key to food safety. One way to strengthen food safety during transport is to maintain proper temperature of food during transport. Usually a temperature less than 4 Degree Centigrade is sufficient to prevent growth of microbial organisms. Additionally focus areas should be cleanliness of the vehicle, design of the vehicle (to be covered and insulated), appropriate make of the vehicle and time of transport.

- **Food Temperature and Serving** - In the food preparation area proper temperature must be maintained at all times, preferable below 15 Degree centigrade to facilitate the maintenance of in process materials at proper temperatures. Regulatory requirement in India suggests that hot food to be held at 65 Degree centigrade and food served cold like salads must be held at below 5 degree centigrade. Preparation of salads must be done in hygienic environment and ingredients must be properly sanitized prior to use in salad preparation. Adequate equipment support in this regard helps viz. hot and cold plates in the buffet corner or ice baths. Regular monitoring of temperatures at all stages of the food preparation and serving operation is also a necessity.

- **Food Allergens** - One of the most discussed area in catering is the control of food allergen. Caterers face many customer demands with respect to allergen control. EU regulations identify 14 food items as allergens viz. Wheat gluten, Soya, Egg, Peanuts, Tree nuts, Crustaceans, Fish, Milk and milk products, Sesame, Sulphite, Mustard, Molluscs, Sulphite and Lupin. Allergic reaction varies from consumer to consumer. It is effective control in catering to mention proper allergens contained in food in the menu items.
HACCP System in Catering

HACCP is Hazard analysis and Critical control point. It is a proactive system of assuring Food safety through proactive identification and control of Food safety hazards in any food operations. Catering operations design and apply a HACCP system in their operations to control and ensure food safety which along with good hygiene practice help to minimize Food safety risks.

Usually HACCP system is designed based on the number of process in any operation and in this regard catering industry faces challenge to organize their operations into processes. In some operations individual menus are taken as individual process and a separate HACCP plan is documented.

This however may lead to a lot of paperwork and a complex HACCP control system. One way of streamlining this is to take the approach of clustering the similar menu items under groups thereby reducing the number of separate HACCP studies, viz. Salads, Bakery, Confectionaries, Hot serve foods, cold serve foods etc.

Effective Control of Hazards through Pre Requisite Programs

In order to ensure HACCP controls are successful, a good Pre requisite Program (PRP) commonly known as good manufacturing practices has to be established first. Those 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 etc.

Indian regulations as well as Codex guidelines include good reference of PRPs, which can be applied in the catering sectors.

Training is an important part of Food safety in the catering industry. All food handlers as well as staff and employees related to the food process needs to be trained in the various aspect of Food safety. Hygiene and HACCP in a catering operation to ensure that the HACCP system is effectively implemented and maintained. All aspects of Hazard, hazard control, PRP programs and the food safety risk related to PRP as well as their controls are important training topics which must be understood by all personnel associated with the food process. This not only involves the kitchen staff but also the staff involved in stewarding, serving, raw material procurement, maintenance and logistic teams.

Finally, 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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