



## Time for a Summer Clean

One of the fundamental aspects to any food business is having an efficient cleaning, sanitising and maintenance program. The major advantage of having such a program is the ability to produce safe food to your customers which in turn reduces the risk of food poisoning incidents. In addition to this the premises will appear cleaner and more appealing to the customer. A combination that has the potential to increase the productivity of a food business.

Under the Food Standards Code, clean means; "Clean to touch and free of extraneous visible matter and objectionable odour". Therefore when a surface has been cleaned properly it must feel, look and smell clean.

A cleaning, sanitising and maintenance program is more than just washing the dishes and mopping the floor. It also involves other surfaces and equipment like walls, shelves, cupboards and the exhaust hood. Areas which are difficult to get to are often the most neglected.

For example surfaces behind the cooking equipment, underneath fridges and freezer chests or around hot water systems.

To ensure such a program is effective, it needs to be kept simple and clearly identify the following;

- What item/s require cleaning? (walls, floor, exhaust hood, cutting boards etc)
- What is the frequency of cleaning? (hourly, daily, weekly etc)
- Who is responsible for doing the actual cleaning?

Another important factor to remember when cleaning your food premises is to be aware of the difference between cleaning and sanitising. Cleaning with the use of detergents, soaps etc will remove course, built up organic material from surfaces. This is generally satisfactory for non- food contact surfaces like floors, walls, ceilings, cupboards and shelving etc. However for food contact surfaces like chopping boards, preparation

benches, crockery, cutlery (utensils), pots, pans and food storage containers etc they not only require the cleaning step, but also a process where any bacteria (micro organisms) that are present on the surface are completely removed. This is where the sanitation step is required.

There are two effective measures a food business can take to sanitise equipment and food contact surfaces. The first involves exposing the surface to high temperature. This can be achieved by placing equipment within a commercial grade dishwasher that has a rinse temperature over 82°C. The second method involves the use of chemical sanitisers. The most commonly used sanitisers used in the food industry are chlorine based sanitisers.

Once the process is complete the food contact surfaces and equipment which have been sanitised should be rinsed and allowed to thoroughly dry before reuse. Air drying is preferable, however if towels are used they must be clean and dry.

## Do your cutting boards make the cut?

Cutting boards must be kept clean and in a good condition. Wooden cutting boards or chopping blocks due to their porous nature can be difficult to clean properly making it advisable to use plastic or glass chopping boards for raw meat, poultry and seafood. For the majority of food premises, it is recommended that at least three cutting boards be used during food preparation: – one for raw food, one for ready to eat food (fruit and salad ingredients) and one for cooked food.

The ideal situation which several food premises in the Shoalhaven have adopted is to use colour coded cutting boards for different foods;

- Fruit, Salad ingredients and Vegetables** – Green
- Dairy** – White

- Poultry** – Yellow
- Raw Meat** – Red
- Cooked Meat** – Brown
- Seafood** – Blue

All cutting boards should be scrubbed with hot water and detergent followed by a sanitation process after use. Plastic cutting boards are good as they can be washed at high temperatures in the dishwasher which not only cleans the surface but also achieves an effective method of sanitation. However, any board which becomes scratched to the point where it can no longer be effectively cleaned should be promptly discarded and replaced as the surface will be more likely to support the harborage and growth of food poisoning bacteria.

## How do the food premises in the shoalhaven rate?

For the period 1st July through to the 30th September 2009, Council's Environmental Health Officers conducted a total of 374 food inspections. The most inspections carried out for any three month period since the introduction of the Food Regulation Partnership.

When compared with the preceding three month period (1st April to the 30th June 2009), the latest statistics reveal a significant improvement with the percentage of premises rated as poor dropping from 19% down to 13%.

The reasons for this improvement can be attributed to a combination of factors. Most notably Councils recently implemented Food Safety Program.

This program incorporates four key components;

1. Food Premises Inspection Procedures
2. Food Premises Compliance Procedures
3. Communication Plan
4. Education Plan

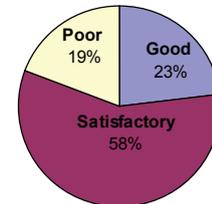
These four components combine to ensure that all food premises in the Shoalhaven are being inspected on a regular and consistent basis with enforcement action being exercised where appropriate to ensure compliance with the food safety standards.

Also making an important contribution to the Food Safety Program is Council's "I'm Alert Food Safety" interactive online training. This training has been available to all food handlers in the Shoalhaven for the past 10 months and based on the number of hits the site is receiving, in addition to positive feedback from food premises, the training is proving to be very popular. To visit the site go to: [www.shoalhaven.imalert.com.au](http://www.shoalhaven.imalert.com.au) and follow the simple on screen instructions to complete your training.

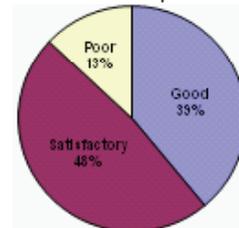
Finally and most importantly is the ongoing cooperation that Council receives from food businesses. Such cooperation in addition to a commitment to comply with food safety standards

will ensure businesses can create an environment where safe and healthy food is paramount to customer service.

**Status of Food Premises in the Shoalhaven from 1/4/09 - 30/6/09**  
Total number of inspections - 330



**Status of Food Premises in the Shoalhaven from 1/7/09 - 30/9/09**  
Total number of inspections - 374



## Study into the cleanliness of Food Businesses in the Shoalhaven

Council Environmental Health Officers recently undertook a study to assess the cleanliness of food contact surfaces in food premises within the Shoalhaven.

The aim of the study was to assess the benefits of using "hygiene swabs" during food premises inspections. This in turn would then provide an insight into the effectiveness of cleaning practices of food businesses.

The swabs that were used in the study are a newly developed technology that detects residues of glucose and lactose which are present in 85% of all food products. The results, obtained within 60 seconds were then analysed to see whether food contact surfaces were clean or unclean. A further swab was taken to test for bacterial contamination, to indicate whether or not the surface

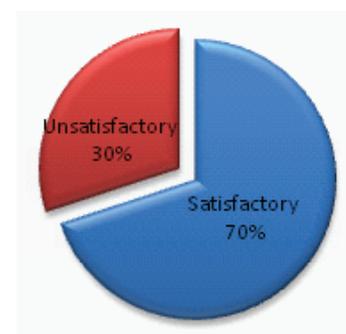
had been effectively sanitised as well.

The overall findings of the study are outlined below;

- 40% of food contact surfaces that appeared visually clean tested positive for glucose and/or lactose, indicating that the surface had either not been cleaned effectively or not cleaned at all.
- Of the above 40% that indicated an unclean surface, 56% were stainless steel surfaces (meat slicers, food preparation benches, bain-marie trays etc), compared with 24% of other food contact surfaces such as plastic cutting boards. The item on cutting boards on the previous page provides some good tips on cutting board maintenance.
- With regard to whether the surfaces were effectively sanitised, 30% of all

surfaces tested were found to have high levels of bacterial contamination that were above the recommended safe levels as prescribed by the NSW Food Authority.

**Percentage of total Food Contact Surfaces deemed to be effectively sanitised**



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