



NATIONAL
FOOD SAFETY
MONTH



Developing A Culture Of Food Safety - Restaurant Manager's Edition

As a restaurant manager, you are required to oversee the day-to-day operations of your restaurant, manage various restaurant workers, and offer guests an enjoyable dining experience. An important job, no doubt. But you also have another, more critical job to perform—keeping customers safe.

While this responsibility does not fall solely on you, managers set the tone for food safety practices throughout the restaurant.

In this eBook, we'll explore how you can set up your restaurant staff for success when it comes to meeting and exceeding food safety standards when you strengthen your food safety management system through:



Training programs



**Standardized
procedures**

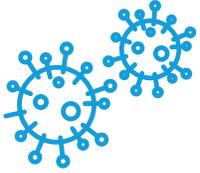


**Measures to
gauge success**

By introducing systemized programs, procedures, and measures to your operations, employees will feel empowered to make smart choices, and you can develop a culture of food safety in your restaurant.



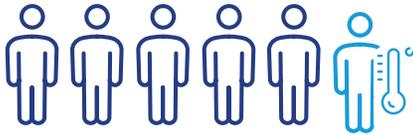
Food Safety is an Ongoing Concern



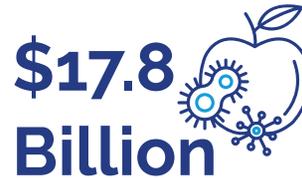
Although the restaurant industry has gotten exponentially better at preventing and containing foodborne illnesses, the highly contagious nature of pathogens means they are able to travel quickly, sometimes unknowingly, from person to person.

Common misconceptions about foodborne illnesses can lead to mismanagement of outbreaks in restaurants. For example, the CDC estimates that nearly half of restaurant-related outbreaks are caused by sick food handlers transmitting the disease.¹ One of the most important steps a restaurant manager can take to prevent outbreaks is to ensure sick employees are sent home and given adequate time to recover.

These numbers show the current impact of foodborne illness in the US:



According to the CDC, nearly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases in the United States each year²



**\$17.8
Billion**

Foodborne illnesses take an economic toll, too. Illnesses stemming from contaminated food cost the US an estimated \$17.8 billion annually.³



**\$1.9
Million**

Plus, research indicates that a single foodborne outbreak in a fast-casual restaurant can cost the establishment up to \$1.9 million in lawsuits, legal fees, and fines.⁴

The issue of foodborne illnesses in food service is ever-present. So, how can you as a restaurant manager foster a food-safe environment and help protect customers from getting sick? It's time to step up your operations game with a strong food safety management system.

¹ CDC. (2022, April 7). Can Restaurant Managers Talk with Sick Workers? Three Things Restaurant Managers Need To Know.

² CDC. (2018, November 5). Estimates of Foodborne Illness in the United States.

³ Hoffman, S. & Ahn, J. (2021, April 2). Economic Cost of Major Foodborne Illnesses Increased \$2 Billion From 2013 to 2018.

⁴ John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. (2018, April 16). A Foodborne Illness Outbreak Could Cost a Restaurant Millions, Study Suggests.



Strengthen Your Food Safety Management System

The term food safety management system (FSMS) might sound complicated, but a FSMS is simply a systemized outline of the different food safety policies and procedures implemented in your restaurant.

Chances are you already follow some sort of FSMS in your restaurant. But how can you be sure your efforts to promote food safety are enough? When workplace practices are rooted in strong, research backed policies and procedures, foodborne

illness risk factors are significantly reduced, customer satisfaction is increased, and employees are more empowered to make smart food safety decisions.⁵

While there is no universal food safety management system, there are standard FSMS practices that help contribute to safer, more effective restaurant operations. These practices are aligned with active managerial control (AMC) principles.

AMC is a proactive approach to food safety that implies:



Having certified food safety managers on staff



Training employees to prevent hazards



Recognizing potential foodborne illness hazards in day-to-day operations



Defining standard operating procedures



Monitoring the effectiveness of food safety actions

Let's take a look at how you can implement these principles into your restaurant operations and strengthen your FSMS.

⁵ National Restaurant Association. (2019). Food Safety Management Systems: Controlling Risks to Keep Food Safe.



Programs

As a restaurant manager, one of the most important things you can do to promote a food-safe environment is to have certified food protection managers on staff.

The Environmental Health Specialists Health Network (EHS-Net) found that restaurants with certified managers had better food safety practices overall and were less likely to be linked with foodborne illness outbreaks.⁶

A **certified food protection** manager is an individual who has demonstrated proficient knowledge in food safety practices by passing a nationally-recognized credentialing exam.

Food protection managers are integral to a strong FSMS because they provide a reliable point of contact for staff to gain knowledge and communicate questions or concerns regarding food safety best practices.

In addition to having a certified food protection manager on hand, investing in continual employee training will enable your team to recognize food-related risks and take part in safe food handling practices. You can help staff adopt winning practices by implementing robust standard operating procedures.

⁶ Environmental Health Services. (n.d.). Restaurant Food Safety Findings in Plain Language.

⁷ Environmental Health Services Network. (2019, June 18). Food Safety Certification and Knowledge.



Procedures

Having clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) is critical for establishing consistency and accountability among restaurant employees.

SOPs allow staff to reference step-by-step processes for completing restaurant tasks. These types of written materials act as guides for new hires and seasoned employees alike and can reduce labor and product costs, improve decision making, reduce employee confusion, and create consistency in task performance. It is important to supplement these formal SOPs with other written materials such as posters, quick guides, and recipe cards so employees feel prepared to tackle daily activities with confidence.

EHS-Net recommends applying food safety training programs that adequately address the needs of employees with limited English speaking and reading skills in order to help prevent the spread of foodborne illnesses in restaurants.⁷

Whenever possible, make SOPs available in an employee's native language.

While establishing solid procedures is a great start, the only way to know if your FSMS is producing the intended results is to monitor its effectiveness.



Measures

Conducting internal audits of your restaurant operations regularly is a great way to measure the integrity of your system.

Do this by conducting self-inspections, going through checklists, reviewing temperature and storage logs, monitoring employee hygiene, conducting quality controls, and tracking health inspection reports. If any inconsistencies are identified in your reports, you know where your problem lies and can take swift measures to address the risk.

While self-inspections are not required by state and local health departments, conducting regular self-inspections can improve quality assurance and help you prepare for regulated health inspections.⁸

Involve employees in the monitoring process by making opening and closing checklists a part of daily duties. Your staff will be reminded to complete regular food safety operations and they will feel empowered knowing they have contributed to a safer workplace overall.

Consider having a third-party organization audit your system as well. Having an unbiased set of eyes reviewing your restaurant's FSMS performance can help bring to light issues you might not have considered. As an added benefit, third-party auditors can help keep quality assurance departments up to date on industry best practices.

⁸ National Restaurant Association. (2019). Food Safety Management Systems: Controlling Risks to Keep Food Safe.

Bring Your System to Scale

Now that you know what a strong FSMS consists of, how can you manage your system at scale?

Managers of large restaurants and multi-unit owners need to be able to implement food safety management systems throughout their restaurants with efficiency. Fortunately, digital operations-based tools can help standardize food safety practices across your entire brand.

ServSafe Ops is a restaurant operations management platform that drives operational efficiency through task verification, access to information, ongoing training, issue identification, employee engagement, and more. With customizable checklists and reporting, ServSafe Ops provides verification of tasks completed and acts as both a measure of employee performance and a method for engagement with your brand. To learn more, visit **ServSafeOps.com**.



Get in touch with our ServSafe team to start building out your culture of food safety.