



PART OF THE 2022 SERIES

Top 9 Food Safety Challenges

SUPERMARKETS AND GROCERY STORES

Supermarkets are wide and varied environments. A food safety challenge can look very different from department to department based on the food products, equipment, and physical conditions within an area. Case in point: in more than 4,300 assessments conducted by Steritech in the first 7 months of 2022, the same three issues rose to the top across three departments. The differences are in the details.

PRODUCE TOP 3 CHALLENGES



01 | General facility cleanliness

The cleanliness of floors, walls, and ceilings goes beyond customer experience issues. It poses cross-contamination issues and attracts pests. Delivery turnover in walk-in coolers/refrigerated prep areas allows for fast debris accumulation, while high humidity promotes rapid pathogen growth. These same problems can extend to customer-facing display cases.



02 | Cleanliness of nonfood-contact surfaces

Even when surfaces don't contact foods, their cleanliness can affect food safety because of the potential for cross-contamination. In produce, frequently cited items that allow for quick build-up of biological/organic matter are plastic curtains separating areas, fruit drying racks, and produce wrapping machines. Make a cleaning schedule for these items and stick to it.



03 | Cleanliness of food-contact surfaces

This item impacts anything that food directly touches – cutting boards, knives, slicers, nozzles, or other equipment parts. If ice machines are available in produce, they are frequently cited. Remember, ice is a food! Pineapple corers are another top issue. Assign responsibility for cleaning these items to specific people to ensure it is done often and correctly.

BAKERY TOP 3 CHALLENGES



01 | General facility cleanliness

The same cleanliness of floors, walls, and ceilings parameters apply in bakery as they do in produce. Scratch bakeries have more challenges than "thaw and sell" bakeries due to more activity. Keep a close eye on dust build-up everywhere, stay on top of hood and vent cleaning, and remove industrial oven panels weekly to inspect for pests and clean.



02 | Cleanliness of nonfood-contact surfaces

Surfaces that do not contact foods present opportunities for cross-contamination if they are not cleaned well. Many items like knobs, buttons, and handles regularly get overlooked. One major issue for bakeries tends to be the proofer. Although it is easy to clean, it can become soiled easily due to humidity. Be sure to include it in regular cleaning routines.



03 | Cleanliness of food-contact surfaces

If a surface touches food, it should have an established cleaning schedule that is followed. Dough mixer paddles, whisks, and dough hooks are frequently cited. To ensure cleanliness, soak immediately after use to prevent debris from becoming harder to remove when dried. Water chillers and small metal decorator tips can also be problem items.

DELI TOP 3 CHALLENGES



01 | Cleanliness of nonfood-contact surfaces

A single piece of equipment can contain both food-contact and nonfood-contact surfaces. In delis, rotisserie areas, fryers, slicers, and clean-in-place equipment parts that don't contact food can easily accumulate grease build up. It is critical to maintain required cleaning on this type of equipment because just one or two "skipped" cleanings can make them much harder to clean.



02 | General facility cleanliness

Busy deli environments create plenty of opportunity for organic matter and debris build up on floors, walls, and ceilings. Cleaning below and around fixed and hard-to-move equipment, such as display cases, is critically important because food debris often falls to the floor and gets pushed underneath. Display cases themselves should be cleaned daily at a minimum.



03 | Cleanliness of food-contact surfaces

Keeping food contact surfaces clean in the deli presents unique challenges due to the small crevices in many heavily-used pieces of equipment, like rotisserie spits and the food-contact surfaces of slicers. Remember that clean-in-place equipment must be cleaned every 4 hours. Put someone in charge of monitoring this time or use timers to help with reminders.

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