

PART OF THE 2023 SERIES

Top 10 Food Safety Challenges

CASUAL + FAST CASUAL RESTAURANTS



Steritech analyzed OnBrand360® data from nearly 25,000 food safety assessments from the first seven months of 2023. The findings revealed that the cleanliness and condition of nonfood-contact surfaces and facilities are the top challenges faced by Casual and Fast Casual restaurants – and may be attributed to operational and budget limitations that the industry continues to grapple with.



TRAINING GAPS



LABOR SHORTAGES



BUDGET LIMITATIONS

1 Cleanliness of nonfood-contact surfaces: 24,778 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

The cleanliness of nonfood-contact surfaces has remained a primary concern since 2022. Surfaces like shelves, cooler handles, knobs, buttons, and equipment exteriors can harbor grease, dirt, and pathogens. Incorporate these surfaces into your daily cleaning routine.

2 Condition of nonfood-contact surfaces: 22,295 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

The condition of nonfood-contact surfaces continues to be a top challenge. Cracked knife handles, worn cooler gaskets, and rusty shelves are some of the most commonly cited surfaces. Plan ahead for equipment repair and replacement to mitigate safety risks.

3 General facility cleanliness: 21,703 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

Grease, dirt, and food residue can build up on walls, ceilings, and floors. Limit cross-contamination hazards and show customers that their safety is a priority by establishing a schedule for routine cleaning in food prep spaces and customer-facing areas.

4 Cleanliness of food-contact surfaces: 14,346 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

Cleaning best practices can fall short for surfaces that are continuously in direct contact with food. Common culprits include ice machines, bar/soda nozzles, cutting boards, and frying pans. Appoint specific individuals to clean equipment at predetermined intervals.

5 General facility condition: 11,519 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Rising to the top 10 list this year, general facility concerns often involve missing grout, rusted vents, and damaged wall coverings. These can be challenging to replace so prevention is key. Pro tip: Refrain from pressure washing, which can cause and exacerbate these issues.

NEW IN 2023

6 Condition of food-contact surfaces: 9,781 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

The deterioration of tools and equipment can happen rapidly in restaurant kitchens. Damaged knife blades, cutting boards and fryers, in particular, pose contamination and safety risks. Create an inventory of deteriorating items to help track replacement needs.

7 In-use utensil storage: 6,425 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Utensils must not present contamination risks. Ice scoops are frequently noted for improper storage; after use, they're often placed in ice, allowing the handle to become a source of contamination. Designate containers for safe utensil storage when not in use.

8 General food protection: 5,942 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Improperly stored foods can attract pests and are at risk for contamination. Common problem areas include food stored on shelves and in walk-in coolers. Use air-tight containers to prevent exposure to moisture and separate raw ingredients from ready-to-eat foods.

9 Cold holding: 5,566 violations

PRIMARY DRIVER:

Cold holding is a consistent challenge. Service lines are one of the biggest risk areas for harmful pathogens, but regular temperature monitoring and the use of chilled, insulated containers can help prevent food spoilage. Be sure to keep perishables at or below 41°F.

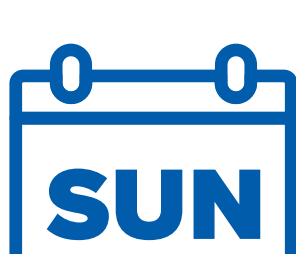
10 Clean food-contact surface storage: 5,271 violations

PRIMARY DRIVERS:

New to the top 10 list in 2023, it's important to store cleaned and sanitized food-contact surfaces in a way that prevents them from coming into contact with contaminated surfaces or substances. Utensils, cutting boards, and containers are commonly cited.

NEW IN 2023

Due to these constraints, are brands under pressure to favor certain food safety best practices over others?



Sundays are shown to have the least amount of food safety violations on average



Breakfast daypart has a significantly higher number of food safety violations than lunch and dinner combined.*

*Per assessment at casual and fast casual establishments



Q4 had a 5% lower rate of food safety violations per assessment than the annual average in casual and fast casual restaurants



No significant change in rate of food service violations per assessments

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