

# Why Bad Things Happen to Good Kitchens

Good food safety starts by doing the little things.

Signs, signs everywhere a sign...

Over the past 35 years, while conducting thousands of kitchen inspections, I've discovered some common mistakes that most kitchens are guilty of. They are the kinds of things that can easily fall between the cracks at even a well-run operation.

Foodservice directors and restaurant managers have quite a bit of responsibility and oversee the big picture of running the business. Therefore, many of the small detailed duties that are not assigned to anyone in particular may go without being performed and may inadvertently result in crises or disaster. Can you learn from other restaurant's mistakes (or your own...)?

- Some of the most common examples of issues that leave the organization exposed are:
- Cooks not using thermometers and using their fingers instead to judge doneness.
- Prep staff handling raw chicken directly next to fresh produce.
- Leaving the kitchen wet, leaving food in the drains, not removing the trash to the dumpsters and not cleaning out the dead pests from the light shield, all of which attracts roaches and other vermin. Poor coordination with your PCO.
- Not cleaning the grease off the filters, which results in grease dripping into the food being prepared below.
- Food that is not covered, labeled or dated.
- Cracked or broken food containers or lids.
- Dented, bloated or rusty cans in the storeroom.
- Broken equipment being utilized with temporary fixes.
- Not having SDS (Safety Data Sheets, formerly MSDS) training or information available to staff.
- Poor documentation of training given to staff.
- Lack of food safety knowledge by employees in regards to their particular position
- Failure to repair broken equipment, plumbing and maintain walls and floors in good condition.
- Failure to have a comprehensive allergy and ADA policy.

In a recent CDC study released on June 28, 2013, they reported the following statistics on food safety and health issues: Restaurant workers who DID NOT wash their hands after handling raw beef with their bare hands equaled a whopping 62%. Kitchen managers in 40% of restaurants studied did not have a designated area and/or cutting boards for raw chicken. In addition, more than 50% of restaurants don't utilize thermometers when cooking chicken. Thermometers were used just 20% of the time to calculate that

hamburgers were cooked to the proper temperature. It was also reported that 20% of workers worked a shift while they were sick with flu-like symptoms. [Read this news story for more on that report.](#)

Our motto is “**Food Safety Comes First.**” You’ve spent years building the reputation of your operation. While the issues listed above may seem inconsequential, if not done or not done correctly, they may have a huge negative impact on your guests, on your employees and on your brand. Relying solely on third-party auditor does not take the place of daily good food health and safety monitoring. Now is the time to take a good long hard look at some of the smaller details in your operation in order to ensure that you are not caught unaware by the Health Department or a potential lawsuit. The devil is in the details...

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