

Food Consulting Services Newsletter

Hygiene Certificates

We have introduced a new Hygiene Certificate for our clients, which will be issued on a per audit basis, and will indicate the Microbiological Index as well as the Food Safety Risk Index (Composite Walkthrough Score).

We have also introduced a certificate of excellence for those truly committed to hygiene in their facility.

The criteria needed to achieve excellence is based on a Microbiological Index of 95% plus, as well as a Composite Index of 90% and above.

We encourage our clients to display these, in order to highlight their achievement, but also to encourage awareness of hygiene in the industry. This is the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the marketing value of good hygiene.



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Nylon Cutting Boards

Nylon cutting boards are arguably the highest risk equipment the kitchen has. These boards almost always come into direct contact with prepared foods, and in this light require special attention with regards to cleaning and sanitation.

The Hygiene Survey Report highlights this risk, by assessing several factors in handling the cutting boards.

It is important to note that the cleaning and one of the three sanitation options must be followed after each use of the cutting boards.

Cutting Board Procedures

1. Scrub with a brush and detergent
2. Spray with a QAC-based sanitiser. Alternatively,
3. Soak for a minimum of 30 minutes in a chlorine-based sanitiser. Alternatively,
4. Run the boards(s) through the dish washing machine after cleaning.
5. In all cases, store in an appropriate storage rack, away from cross contamination to allow air drying.

The very first requirement is that these cutting boards be scrubbed with detergent and a nylon-bristled plastic brush, in order to correctly degrease the boards (and to allow a planning effect to get rid of excess plastic shavings from the boards).

Secondly is the sanitation procedure:

- a. The cutting boards can be sprayed with a chlorine or QAC-based sanitiser and stored to dry.
- b. They can be soaked in a correctly diluted chlorine-based sanitiser.
- c. Alternatively, they can be put through the dish washing machine after scrubbing the boards.

It is important to note that first cleaning and then one of the three sanitation options must be followed after **each** use of the cutting boards.

The final critical step is the storage of these high-risk items:

The cutting boards should be stored in a designated rack, away from any possibility of cross contamination and spaced apart to allow air drying. Cutting boards should not be stored behind taps, left on tables or on the lower shelves under tables.

Facilities



Part of the service that we offer our clients is the assessment of the maintenance aspects of the facility. This is presented as a separate Facilities Report.

The mode of assessment is the same as with the Hygiene Survey Report, in that FCS evaluates minor, major and critical concerns with regards to the condition, design and materials of the facility.

The critical Facilities concerns can be defined as “any concern that carries a direct risk to food safety”.

These are especially related to operating temperatures, but also extend to major concerns with the condition of equipment, tables and shelving areas.

Rusted equipment, damaged tables and shelves are concerns because the roughened areas collect dirt more easily than smooth surfaces. Rust and flaking paint are a physical contamination concern, and we must always ask “Where has the paint gone?” There is always potential for this to get into the foods.

FCS encourages our clients to focus on the critical and major concerns first—and then to focus on the minor concerns if the budget allows.



Critical & Major Facility Checkpoints

1. Hot water supply (above 50°C at all times).
2. Small refrigeration unit temperatures.
3. Walk-in refrigeration unit temperatures.
4. Washing and rinsing cycle temperatures for the automatic warewashing machine.
5. Condition of equipment.
6. Condition of preparation tables.
7. Condition of the shelving areas.

When to use a chlorine-based sanitiser

For much of the sanitation requirements in a kitchen, the Industry had moved to sanitisers based on QAC (quatary ammonium compounds) because they are less corrosive and tainting. However, chlorine can still have its place.



Chlorine tips

1. Use it for routine overnight sanitising of cutting boards
2. Use it sparingly as a "shock treatment" instead of the usual QAC-based product
3. Use a detergent-fortified version for initial cleaning if desired
4. Use it for storing clean knives provided the solution is never soiled
5. Don't use it for routine table and equipment sanitation—a QAC sanitiser will achieve the same results with less risk of tainting food and corroding equipment
6. Don't use it in floor drains

Some clients use a chlorine-based **sanitiser** (that is, a product with a chlorine oxidiser combined with detergent) in a bucket for the initial wiping step. This is perfectly fine as long as the product is not simply a chlorine **disinfectant**. It amounts to the **cleaning** step because the detergent and the highly alkaline pH are good for cutting fat. The table should be wiped till only damp and there should be little residue.

It is critical to then spray a QAC-based sanitiser for the actual sanitation step and (ideally) leaving it to air dry. This will dilute and neutralise any traces of chlorine. If wiping is essential, then use only paper towel after a suitable **contact-time**. Check with the chemical supplier for this. We don't recommend leaving chlorine on the worktops routinely (that is, as the sanitation step) because of corrosion risks and well as taste-tainting.

- A. A weekly "shock" treatment with the chlorine sanitiser instead of the usual QAC during a quiet period (so that proper rinsing can occur after the contact time) is allowable.
- B. You can store clean utensils like ladles and knives in a chlorine solution. However, the solution must stay **clean** (by removing gross soil in a separate bucket or rinsing the utensil first). There is a possible taste-tainting issue so check for this. (It is not a safety issue: chlorine tastes bad at much lower levels than the toxic dose, so no one will ingest too much).
- C. A chlorine sanitiser is very good for overnight soaking of cutting boards and utensils. In the case of white boards you also get the visual enhancement of the bleaching effect. With utensils the primary concern would be increased corrosion.