

FOOD SAFETY



BULLETIN 2018 ■ ISSUE 7

BE FOOD SAFE!

A publication for retail food establishment licensees and food handlers



STAY CAUTIOUS
OF *S. AUREUS*

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OPENING MESSAGE

Welcome to the Food Safety Bulletin.

In this issue, we look at how in the face of rapid industry transformation, NEA adapts our regulatory environment to facilitate enterprise and be responsive to new business developments. Across various touchpoints with food retail businesses, NEA has shaped our regulations in consultation with industry to be business-friendly while upholding public health standards. We will also briefly share about a guide that was developed by various agencies for foodshops to achieve noise mitigation.

Additionally, our colleagues from AVA will share more about the 'farm-to-table' movement, a movement that is gaining popularity in Singapore. In the article, learn about Singapore's local producers and the advantages of using quality local ingredients.

In the food safety segment, we will highlight the importance of good personal hygiene and

will look at *S. aureus* bacteria that can be found in about a quarter of the healthy human population. The merit of good personal hygiene will be exemplified in the food poisoning case study. Lastly, in ensuring the safety of consumers, we will look at the food safety risks of salads as it is commonly served uncooked.



▲ Photo Credit: Kok Fah Technology Farm



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Stay Cautious of *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*)!

S. aureus is a type of bacteria that can be found in about a quarter of the healthy population. They can be present in the nose, throat and on the skin of humans without causing illness.

However, when food is handled in an unhygienic manner, *S. aureus* can be transferred from humans to food and then multiply to high numbers over time and produce heat-stable toxin. Such toxin will remain in food even after reheating, and can result in food poisoning between 1 to 6 hours upon consumption, causing stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration.



Ready-to-eat (RTE) dishes that require much handling during food preparation are more prone to *S. aureus* contamination. For instance, sandwiches, salads, sushi, wraps and cream-filled pastries. You can protect consumers from *Staphylococcal* food poisoning.



DOs

1. Handle RTE food with clean gloves or utensils.
2. Wash hands frequently using soap and water.
3. Wipe hands using a clean cloth or paper towel.

DON'Ts

1. Handle RTE food with bare hands or torn gloves.
2. Reuse disposable gloves during food preparation.
3. Pick nose or clean ears with fingers.
4. Wipe off perspiration with bare hands.
5. Comb or touch hair.
6. Taste food with fingers or with a spoon that has not been cleaned between each tasting.
7. Blow into plastic bags or food wrappers to open them.

When should hands be washed immediately?

1. Before food preparation.
2. When changing tasks (e.g. in between handling raw and ready-to-eat food).
3. After using the toilet.
4. After blowing the nose; after sneezing or coughing.
5. After engaging in activities that may dirty the hands (e.g. cleaning duties, trash disposal and handling of money).



SCAN TO VIEW

For more information on the importance of proper hand washing, check out this video >>

FOOD POISONING



A food establishment's licence was suspended after almost 200 individuals had come down with food poisoning. After consuming pastries prepared and sold from the local food retail establishment, the affected individuals experienced symptoms of food poisoning, which was later diagnosed as gastroenteritis.

To protect consumers from public health risks, the food establishment was

temporarily suspended for thorough cleaning and sanitisation of the premises, including equipment, utensils, food preparation surfaces and toilets. The suspension was eventually lifted after about a month after food safety measures were fully implemented by the food establishment to rectify the lapses detected.

Investigations found samples of pastries that tested positive for *E. coli* and *Salmonella*, two

bacteria commonly associated with foodborne infections.

Stool samples from 3 people linked to the outbreak also tested positive for Norovirus. 2 food handlers involved in the preparation of pastry were also tested positive for Norovirus. This suggested that the contamination of the pastries could likely have occurred due to poor personal and food hygiene during food preparation.



Salads are evolving into a trendy food choice among health conscious individuals. This healthier option is available in restaurants, salad bars and even supermarkets. Salads offer a nutritious combination of desired proteins, vitamins and fibre. They are usually served cold, ranging from the type of salad e.g. tossed salad or composed salad. And a bowl of green mixtures dished out a variety of vegetables and dressings which include other ingredients such as fruits or meat.

Notwithstanding the countless health benefits, some salad ingredients are not cooked and its preparation may be a potential sources of bacterial contamination. To ensure the safety of consumers, we should take care to observe good hygiene practices when preparing salads to reduce the risk of contamination and bacterial growth.

TIPS ON PREPARING SALADS HYGIENICALLY



HANDLING AND WASHING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- ★ Discard rotten and damaged fruits, and vegetables.
- ★ Soak fruits and vegetables in a basin of clean tap water for 15 minutes. After which, place them in a clean colander and rinse it under a tap. Shake the colander as you rinse.
- ★ Washing different types of fruits and vegetables.
 - a. Firm (e.g. baby carrots): Scrub the skin gently with a clean brush.
 - b. Soft or leafy (e.g. tomatoes and baby spinach): Rub the surface gently with hands to remove the dirt.
- ★ Cut fruits and vegetables using a designated clean chopping board.

STORAGE AND PREPARATION

- ★ Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and tap water before wearing gloves.
- ★ Do not use gloves for tasks other than food preparation.
- ★ Prepare salad ingredients, portion and keep them in chiller (until ready to use).
- ★ Separate ready-to-eat ingredients from raw food that are intended for cooking.
- ★ Cook raw ingredients such as meats thoroughly.

DISPLAY OF SALAD OPTIONS AT BUFFET LINES

- ★ Plan your quantities and your cooking processes to have your meat options cooked in batches.
- ★ Where possible, cut fruits in batches before display, as the skin of the fruit protects it from contamination and spoilage.
- ★ Display salad dishes in chilled environment.
- ★ Provide separate tongs for customers to handle cooked and raw ready-to-eat-food dishes.
- ★ Monitor and keep the salad buffet line clean.

FINDING 1

Samples of pastries tested positive for high amounts of *E. coli* and *Salmonella*.

ISSUE

Strong correlation to poor personal and food handling / hygiene practices during food preparation.

LEARNING POINTS

- ★ Build a culture of food safety with food handlers observing good personal and food hygiene practices during food preparation.
- ★ Develop an in-house system to conduct daily food hygiene and safety inspections.
- ★ Use gloves when handling cooked/ready-to-eat food e.g. pastries, cakes or cut fruits.

FINDING 2

Food handler did not cover arms completely, and had contact with pastries during preparation.

ISSUE

High risk of contamination during the preparation of ready-to-eat food.

LEARNING POINTS

- ★ Use the right gear when preparing ready-to-eat food, e.g. longer length gloves if wrist and above would contact with food.
- ★ Do not use the same gloves for purposes other than handling food.
- ★ Change gloves regularly, especially after different tasks, or when they are soiled or torn.



ASSURING Consumers & Adding Value to F&B Businesses through Regulatory Reviews

The F&B landscape in Singapore is rapidly transforming with the emergence of new technologies and business models, and evolving expectations from consumers. NEA is continuously advancing to establish a regulatory environment that is business-friendly while upholding high standards of hygiene and food safety.

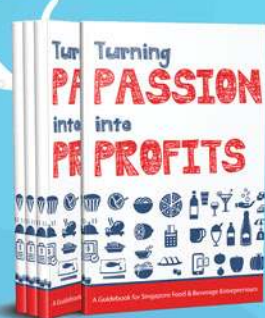
1 STARTING RIGHT

We Hear You!

How to avoid common pitfalls and where to seek help to incubate new ideas and concepts.

IMPLEMENTED:

Supported development of *Start Right Guidebook* by Restaurant Association of Singapore (RAS) to help F&B new entrepreneurs.



2 NEW FOOD CONCEPTS

We Hear You!

Work together to ensure public assurance and to ensure regulatory measures do not stifle industry.

IMPLEMENTED: (for vending machine operators):

1. Developed Technical Reference 57: 2017 (Guidelines in food safety and good hygiene practices for the vending industry) together with SPRING and the industry for **best industry practices**.
2. Issue **single licence** for vending machine operators instead of multiple licences for each vending machine.



3 ONE-STOP FOR ALL

We Hear You!

F&B chains with multiple outlets had to apply for licence at different locations.

IMPLEMENTED:

1. Introduced **electronic licensing** covering full range of licensing functions. No more necessity to make physical visit to counters.
2. **Centralised licensing team**, located at a central location to serve all your licensing needs.



NEA receives more than **10,300** food establishment licence applications per year

NEA licences more than **38,000** food establishment

4 CODE OF PRACTICE ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (COPEH)

We Hear You!

Current requirements limit flexibility to optimise space.

IMPLEMENTED:

1. Changed minimum food preparation area to **10 sq metres**.
2. Removed distinction between kitchen and servery areas for foodstalls.



7 POINTS DEMERIT SYSTEM (PDS)

We Hear You!

Enforcement should be aligned with risk of offences.

IMPLEMENTED:

Revised the PDS based on risk of hygiene offences and its impact on food safety, and **reduced or removed the demerit points for 13 offences** which were assessed to be of lower risk or were administrative in nature.

SERIOUS	MAJOR	MINOR
6 DEMERIT POINTS	4 DEMERIT POINTS	0 DEMERIT POINTS

6 BASIC HYGIENE (REFRESHER) COURSE

We Hear You!

Frequent re-training of staff poses inconvenience and raises costs.

IMPLEMENTED:

1. **Reduced frequency** from every 3 years to 5 years for first refresher and every 10 years thereafter.
2. Provided up to **90% SkillsFuture funding** for SMEs.
3. Provided **Assessment Only Pathway** for seasoned food handlers without having to re-take course.

REFRESHER SCHEDULES			
THEN	3	3	3..
NOW	5	10	10..

5 FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

We Hear You!

Help needed to comprehend and implement FSMS.

IMPLEMENTED:

- Worked with training providers to provide **more training places**.
- Allowed **one FSMS trained personnel to service up to 5 premises under same licensee**.
- Translated **S\$583** to Chinese and developed training materials in Chinese.
- Increased lead time for implementation of FSMS from 6 months to 1 year.

WE HEAR WE VALUE WE ACT



NEA conducted over 24 industry consultations over the past 3 years with various industry associations and F&B sector representatives on a variety of issues, including licensing matters, food hygiene standards, regulatory policies and industry development.

NEA Welcomes Your Feedback

Please continue to share with us on how we may improve our rules and regulations to better address your challenges and support your business needs and innovation.

You may reach us via myENV mobile app or our Online Feedback Form. Alternatively, you may call our hotline 1800-225-5632.

Support SG Farm Fresh Produce

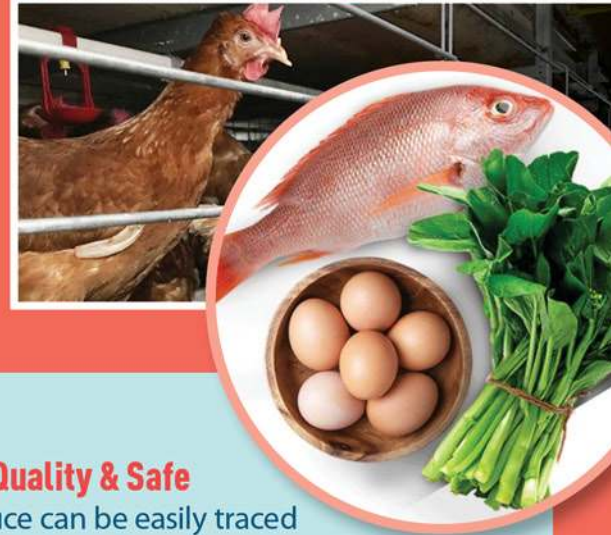


'Farm-to-Table' is one of the recent food trends which is gaining wide acceptance from consumers. This movement advocates knowing your food sources and supporting local farms. In Singapore, the food and beverage (F&B) industry is gradually seeing more chefs and restaurateurs using local produce ingredients in the dishes they serve to customers for their quality and freshness. In choosing local, it also caters to expanding consumer palates' demand for sustainable food choices that taste good while protecting Mother Earth.



▼ Photo Credit: Seng Choon Farm Pte Ltd

▲ Photo Credit: Rong Yao Fisheries



Why Support Local?

1 Fresh & Nutritious

Local produce arrives fresher and retains more nutrients due to shorter delivery time from local farms.

2 Boost Food Security

Over-reliance on imports make Singapore vulnerable to disruptions in food supply. By supporting local produce, we can keep our local farms in business and be more self-sufficient in having a continuous supply of fresh and nutritious food.

3 Best Quality & Safe

Local produce can be easily traced to their farms that adhere to stringent farming guidelines. This offers greater assurance in the quality of food.

4 Protects the Environment

Local produce reduces Singapore's carbon footprint as it travels a shorter distance to get to the nearest outlet.

Keen to know more about local farms? Please visit <https://www.ava.gov.sg> or write in to Public_Edu@ava.gov.sg

Good Practice Guide for Noise Mitigation – For Foodshops

A workgroup, consisting of representatives from NEA, SPF, URA and HDB, has developed a set of good practice guidelines for foodshops to mitigate noise within their premises. The workgroup had engaged the stakeholders, i.e. coffeshop operators, entertainment outlet and restaurant operators on the good practice guidelines. The response was generally good and they shared that the guidelines would be useful. The recommended practices in the guide are not exhaustive, and operators may still consider to consult experts/ consultants for advice on suitable noise control measures.



For more information on the guidelines for noise mitigation.

