

## Cleanliness • Industry, consumers have a part to play

We agree with Mr Brandon Lee that good hygiene practices are critical in curbing the spread of Covid-19 (Hygienic dining environment needed at hawker centres, coffee shops, June 22).

Everyone has a role to play in upholding good hygiene standards.

Under the Environmental Public Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations, stallholders at hawker centres and coffee shops are required to ensure that crockery and receptacles, such as trays, provided to patrons are clean.

Food establishment operators must also keep food preparation areas and premises clean and pest-free, and ensure that food preparation surfaces, eating utensils and cooking equipment are clean.

Singapore Food Agency (SFA) inspects and enforces actions to ensure that food establishments comply with the regulations.

At the start of the Covid-19 situation in Singapore, SFA and the National Environment Agency (NEA) also issued reminders to stallholders at hawker centres and coffee shops on the need for good hygiene practices such as regularly

disinfecting areas that are touched frequently, for example, tabletops.

Stallholders are reminded to adopt measures to maintain good personal and public hygiene, such as the wearing of masks.

They should also ensure that staff who are unwell seek medical attention promptly.

The town councils manage and maintain common property in most hawker centres.

NEA issued an advisory in May to town councils, hawker centre and market operators, managing agents, and cleaning contractors and their staff to maintain high standards of sanitation in hawker centres and markets.

In June, town councils were reminded to step up cleaning and disinfection at hawker centres before dine-in resumed, and to follow the guidelines in the earlier advisory.

There have been extensive educational efforts, including the Clean Tables Campaign this year.

It is now mandatory for patrons to return trays and crockery, and to clear the table of litter at hawker centres, allowing cleaners to focus on cleaning and

disinfecting tables.

This self-service approach is a more sustainable way of keeping our dining places safe and clean.

It is also crucial for diners to exercise good personal hygiene. These include:

- Seeking medical attention promptly and staying home if unwell;
- Wearing a mask and observing safe distancing measures when out of the house;
- Washing hands with soap and water before eating and after going to the toilet;
- Avoiding touching the face with hands;
- Covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing/sneezing, and throwing the tissue away into a bin immediately.

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Covid-19

## Hygienic dining environment needed at hawker centres, coffee shops

Since diners at hawker centres and coffee shops share the same tables, chairs, tableware and food trays over and over, the authorities should regulate their cleaning to curb the spread of Covid-19 and other diseases.

Tableware and food trays should be washed with automatic dishwashers after every use. Steam or hot water will effectively kill germs.

Manual dish-washing is only as good as the cleaners who do the washing. Very often, I have found food remnants and stains on manually washed tableware at coffee shops and hawker centres.

Food trays are often not thoroughly cleaned until the end of the day.

Automatic dishwashers will also reduce the manpower needed to wash the dishes and, therefore, the need for foreign labour.

Sanitising stations should be set up for diners to dip their cutlery into pots of boiling water before use.

Cleaners should wash their table cloth with clean water after each use.

Diners should also be encouraged to stop spitting or throwing used tissue paper into tableware and onto food trays and tables, and to stop placing cutlery directly onto used food trays before use. These unsavoury dining habits help germs spread via contact.

Creative mobile campaigns should be set up at hawker centres and coffee shops to engage stakeholders and persuade them to change their cleaning and dining habits.

A hygienic dining environment is critical in our fight against Covid-19 and any future epidemics, especially since Covid-19 will be endemic.

**Brandon Lee**