



County of Sacramento

No Bare Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Foods

Starting January 1, 2014, a new section (113961) of the California Retail Food Code (CalCode) will prohibit bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. This new requirement will make the use of gloves or utensils mandatory whenever ready-to-eat foods are handled.

Background

The National Advisory Committee for Microbiological Criteria for Foods has identified three interventions that are effective in preventing the transmission of foodborne viruses and bacteria in food facilities:

- ***Restricting ill employees from working with food (already in code)***
- ***Using proper handwashing procedures (already in code)***
- ***Preventing bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food (2014 code addition)***

Specific Requirements

“(b) Except when washing fruits and vegetables, as specified in Section 113992 or as specified in subdivisions (e) and (f), food employees shall not contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment.

(c) Food employees shall minimize bare hand and arm contact with exposed food that is not in a ready-to-eat form.”

How Do I Comply?

Food service workers must wear disposable gloves or use utensils to handle ready-to-eat foods.

What is a “Ready-to-Eat” Food?

A ready-to-eat food is in a form that is edible and does not require additional preparation to be safe to eat. These foods include, but are not limited to:

- Any food that will not be thoroughly cooked or reheated (165F) before it is served
- Any food item that has already been cooked
- Prepared fresh fruits and vegetables served raw or cooked
- Salads and salad ingredients
- Fruit or vegetables for mixed drinks
- Garnishes; lettuce, parsley, lemon wedges, pickles
- Cold meats and sandwiches
- Raw sushi fish and sushi rice
- Bread, toast, rolls, baked goods



Handling Ready-To-Eat foods

Food employees can handle ready to eat foods by using any of the following utensils; tongs, forks, spoons, bakery or deli wraps, wax paper, scoops, spatulas, dispensing equipment, or single use disposable gloves.

Single Use Disposable Gloves

Gloves may be used to handle ready to eat foods, however, gloves must be changed often. One pair of gloves may only be used for one task, used for no other purpose, and shall be discarded when damaged/soiled, when interruptions in food handling occur, or when changing from one type of food to another. Gloves shall also be changed every time hands are washed.

Handwashing

Food service workers are required to thoroughly wash hands using soap and warm water and single-use paper towels whenever hands or gloves are contaminated including but not limited to:

- When entering the food preparation area
- Immediately before engaging in food preparation
- Before “initially” donning gloves
- When changing tasks – between handling raw foods and ready-to-eat foods
- Before dispensing food, serving food, or handling clean tableware and service utensils
- After using the toilet room
- After touching any bare part of the body other than clean hands and arms
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing nose, using tobacco, eating or drinking
- After caring for a service animal or touching shellfish/ crustaceans in display tanks
- During food preparation to remove soil/contamination and prevent cross-contamination

Exceptions

In accordance with CalCode section 113961(f) food employees not serving a highly susceptible population may contact ready to eat foods if certain practices are followed, including pre-approval from Sacramento County Environmental Management Department (EMD). The application for approval includes identification of foods touched by bare hands, documentation of employee training in proper handwashing, prevention of cross-contamination, a written health plan, and documentation that employees use added measures to prevent contamination. Please contact EMD for more details regarding this option.

More Information

Please call or email if you have questions. EMD Specialists are available from 8-10am Mon-Fri at (916) 875-8440. Email: FoodProgram@emd.saccounty.net