

SAFE USE OF SALAD BARS IN SCHOOLS

Equipment

Equipment such as salad bars and food preparation sinks must be certified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification program for food service equipment.

For your salad bar, you may use either a:

- Mechanically refrigerated unit to maintain cold time/temperature control for safety food (TCS) at 41°F or below.

OR

- Non-refrigerated display unit, and use time as public health control (TPHC) for TCS food.

A food preparation sink is required for washing raw fruits and vegetables to remove soil and other contaminants before cutting, preparing, or serving.

Fruits and vegetables purchased pre-washed by the manufacturer are ready-to-eat.

Preventing foodborne illness

Handwashing is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses, which can cause foodborne illness.

The person in charge (PIC) must ensure that:

- Employees and students prevent cross-contamination of ready-to-eat food from bare hands.
- Food on the salad bar is protected from contamination by food guards, packaging, utensils or other effective means such as frequently changing utensils.
- Employees trained in safe operating procedures routinely monitor food temperatures and times or follow requirements for using TPHC.
- Students who make return trips to the salad bar are informed to use clean tableware.

Time as public health control

Schools must write and follow a procedure for TPHC if using a non-refrigerated display unit for TCS food.

Requirements

- Write procedures in advance and maintain them in the food establishment. Have the procedures available for your inspector to review.
- Properly cool food if prepared, cooked, and refrigerated before using TPHC.
- Mark food containers with the time food must be cooked, served or discarded.

Safe use of Salad Bars in Schools continued...

- Cook, serve or discard food within the maximum time marked on the container once removed from temperature control:
 - Hot food (135°F or above) can be held up to four hours after it is removed from temperature control.
 - Cold food (41°F or below) can be held up to four hours after it is removed from temperature control if the temperature is not monitored.
 - Cold food (41°F or below) can be held up to six hours after it is removed from temperature control if the temperature is monitored and never rises above 70°F.
- Once TPHC begins, do not return food to temperature control.
- Discard food in unmarked or improperly marked containers.

Written procedures

Your procedures must describe how you will monitor, mark, and dispose of food held using TPHC. For food prepared, cooked, and refrigerated prior to using TPHC, your procedures must also describe how you will meet safe cooling requirements.

Contact your inspector for help developing procedures that comply with TPHC requirements.