



# Cross Contamination Training

## A Retail Food Service Manager's Guide

You may have managed restaurants for years, and maybe you have even written food safety policies for your business. So why are you still getting cross contamination violations?

Looks like it's time to take a closer look at the training program at your establishment.

What is training, and how do you train your employees on your cross contamination policy?

*During training, you convey knowledge of food safety procedures to the appropriate staff.*

Ask yourself a few quick questions:

**When is the last time you trained your staff?**

**How often do you conduct training?**

Training doesn't have to take a lot of time! In fact, providing brief food safety trainings on a regular basis is one of the most effective ways to educate your staff. During trainings, you are trying to influence human behaviors. This can be a challenge, but you will be rewarded for the time you invest!

As you begin to develop your training procedures, consider these points:

**Who is your Certified Manager?**

Does the Certified Food Manager provide training for staff? Your trainers should be reliable, respected, and influential people in your workplace.

**Are your staff trainings based on your food safety policies?**

The best guidance for your staff will come directly from your cross contamination policies.

**How often do you train your employees?**

Do you have daily, weekly, or monthly team meetings? Do you provide training on protecting food at staff meetings?





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## **Do you have formal training with videos and handouts?**

Do you engage in on-the-job training? Or a combination of both? The best training programs incorporate teaching, demonstration and practice.

## **Who can employees go to when they have food safety questions?**

Is the manager or Person-in-Charge available during all operational hours? Do staff have all applicable contact information?

As the manager, you understand the public health significance of protecting food from cross contamination. But your employees need to understand this as well. Food safety is an important part of your business' reputation and your customers expect the best. So when you train your staff, explain to them why they're being trained on cross contamination. The 2013 FDA Food Code reminds us it is important to separate food in a ready-to-eat form from raw animal food during storage, preparation, holding and display to prevent them from becoming contaminated by pathogens that may be present in or on the raw animal food. In addition, the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) concluded that bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food can contribute to the transmission of foodborne illness and agreed that the transmission could be interrupted. The three interdependent critical factors in reducing foodborne illness transmitted through the fecal-oral route, identified by the NACMCF, include exclusion/restriction of ill food workers; proper hand-washing; and no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. Each of these factors is inadequate when utilized independently and may not be effective. However, when all three factors are combined and utilized properly, the transmission of fecal-oral pathogens can be controlled. You can use current statistics on foodborne illness outbreaks from the FDA or CDC, or look for stories from the science news section of major news publications. Share the stories of other restaurants' successes and failures during your trainings! We can learn from one another.

When you plan a training session with your employees, be sure to set a specific learning objective. Give this goal a time-sensitive, and performance-based outcome from the beginning, and make these expectations clear to your employees.

*For example: "At the end of two weeks, you will be able to properly store food by covering the containers, separating raw animal food containers from RTE food containers, and know what steps to take if the policy is not being followed."*



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Finally, make sure your employees feel accountable. Finish your training by having your employees make a commitment to follow the actions outlined in your cross contamination policy. Studies show that positive behaviors are more likely to continue when a commitment is made publicly, especially in front of peers. So consider having your employees sign a form stating that they received training, or create a training bulletin board that shows who has been trained on specific food safety policies. When employees commit to following food safety policies after they are trained, this builds a food safety culture in your establishment.

To summarize, here are some of the best practices for training programs:

- **The best trainings are based on food safety policies**
- **Brief, frequent staff trainings are more effective than a long presentation conducted only once**
- **Employees remember training that is interactive and hands-on. The best trainings include these three steps:**

**Teaching  
Demonstration  
Practice**

- **Explain why these food safety practices are important**
- **Seal the deal with a formal commitment by your employees to follow your establishment's cross contamination policies**

Remember that your employees want and need direction, and want to know what is expected of them. When you provide that training, success happens! And in the next document, you will learn how to build in a Verification step that allows you to confirm that your policies are being followed.

