



Food safety advice

SOFT ICE CREAM

Ice cream is often viewed as relatively low risk, mainly by virtue of the temperature at which it is served. For manufactured pre-wrapped ice creams this is probably true, but for soft serve and soft scoop ice cream there are a number of measures which must be taken to ensure food safety:

Soft Serve:

- Soft serve ice cream (e.g. 'Mr Whippy') is served directly from the freezer unit at a temperature of about -6°C . Ice cream should not be served at a temperature of above -2.2°C . A bacteria known as *Listeria monocytogenes* is capable of growing as low as -1°C and the vendor should regularly monitor the temperature at which the ice cream is served.
- Soft serve ice cream machines need to be cleaned and sanitised in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This will usually involve taking the machine apart back at the depot/vendor's home and soaking the relevant parts or running cleaning solution through the machine (methods vary.) The appropriate chemicals are expensive and there is a temptation to clean less frequently or substitute other products. This can lead to the growth of harmful bacteria within the machine or the tainting of ice cream with chemical residues.



- Some soft serve machines are 'self-pasteurising' (e.g. 'Carpagiani.'). Such equipment is designed to heat the ice cream mix and machine surfaces to 65°C for 30 minutes, before cooling to 5°C . It is usual to 'pasteurise' daily at the end of the working day, and restrict full cleaning and sanitising to once a week. This equipment is not, however, intended to process unpasteurised mix.



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- Soft serve ice cream mix is either in a powdered form, which is mixed with water or supplied, pre-mixed and pasteurised. Once prepared, the mix must be stored at 7.2°C or below, until the freezing process begins.
- Mixing and filling of the soft serve machine will usually take place at the depot or vendor's home. There should, therefore, be suitable facilities for storing and preparing the mix and cleaning/sanitising containers and other equipment used during preparation. You must make sure you follow the mix supplier's instructions on preparation of the mix.

Soft Scoop:

- Soft scoop ice cream on display should be protected from sources of contamination e.g. by covering or providing a 'sneeze screen'.



- Containers should be used for storing scoops and for rinsing scoops after serving. Both should contain sanitising solutions approved for food use. (Properly diluted 'Milton' or a similar non-tainting food safe sanitiser is usually recommended.) The solution should be changed regularly as bacteria can grow in old solution.

Generally:

A recent study showed that soft ice cream is commonly contaminated with Entrobacteriaceae (gut bacteria) at the point of sale.

This reinforces the need for regular hand washing and effective washing facilities to be provided at the point of sale and also at the place where the ice cream is mixed.

