



Food safety advice

Salad Bars

'Food safety needs to be a main ingredient of any salad bar to prevent illnesses and contamination'.

What are they?

Salad bars can take many forms. They range from purpose built chilled salad bars (the preferred option), to bowls of salad on a serving counter. They are often open for customers to help themselves, which can be particularly hazardous, as they may not be as well controlled.



What problems could there be?

Bacteria

- Bacteria present in salads can multiply or survive preparation or storage conditions and cause spoilage or illness, if eaten. The salads could also be contaminated by cross contamination through contact with raw meat during storage or through food handlers not washing their hands. The food could also become contaminated by customer's hands.
- Bruising or mould growth will naturally occur when salad items become old and damaged.

Physical Contamination

- Salads and vegetables may have soil, stones, insects or other debris stuck to them as they originate in the soil. For example - mushroom fibres can often be mistaken for hairs in food. The fibres are found in the compost they are grown in and some can stay attached when harvested.
- Customers can contaminate the salad bars through sneezing, coughing, touching or leaning over the food.

Chemical Contamination

- This can be caused by misuse of cleaning chemicals, from pesticides used in the growing of such foods or from preservative coatings applied to fresh fruit.



Food safety advice

How can you prevent problems / what is best practice?

- Check produce carefully during purchase/delivery.
- Separate washed and un-washed produce during storage to prevent cross-contamination.
- Wash salad, fruit & vegetables thoroughly before use & check for foreign bodies.
- Prepare salad items on a daily basis.
- Sanitise all utensils and equipment prior to preparation.
- Maintain good personal hygiene at all times.
- Avoid direct handling of salads (use utensils or disposable gloves).
- Set up the salad bar as close to service time as possible, refrigerating food beforehand; or use a refrigerated display.

Use shallow salad containers and refill them frequently. **Never add fresh food on top of food already on display.**

- Use salad bars with 'sneeze guards' fitted if possible, to minimise the risk of contamination by the customer.
- Provide suitably sized (long-handled) tongs and serving spoons. This will prevent customers from having to touch the salad items to retrieve the tongs.



- Clean and sanitise or replace utensils with clean ones on a regular basis.
- Supervise the use of the salad bar if possible. Advise customers and provide signage if necessary.
- Remove any food, which you believe to be contaminated and discard.
- Check for spills and contamination during service. Keep all surface areas clean.
- If foods are not used within four hours and are not in a refrigerated display, ensure that they are discarded at the end of service as the safety and quality of the food may be affected.
- Dispose of all unused salad at the end of the day.

The list is not exhaustive and should be used as guidance. A full hazard analysis of your specific catering operation should be carried out.