

Single-Service Articles

Guidelines for Using Single-Service Articles in Food Establishments



Most foodborne illnesses are caused by mishandling food, however, mishandling utensils including cups, plates and cutlery can also cause illnesses. Bacteria and viruses may survive on utensils if utensils are not cleaned and sanitized properly, or if they are improperly handled by workers. This can cause those who eat from them to become ill.

In addition to making sure workers' hands have been cleaned with soap and water, proper handling of these single-service articles (SSA) is crucial. Manufacturers of SSA have worked hard to ensure that their products are sanitary. Now it is up to you to keep those products sanitary to protect the health of your customers.

Tips for Storing Single-Service Articles

- ✓ Store single-service articles (SSA) at least six inches above the floor in a clean, dry location, where they will not be exposed to splashes, dust or other contamination.
- ✓ Keep SSA away from pesticides, detergents and cleaning compounds.
- ✓ Don't touch the eating surfaces of unwrapped containers, cups, or plates.
- ✓ Keep SSA off the floor and away from garbage, restrooms, or open areas.
- ✓ Remove only SSA that are needed and keep the rest in the original storage container. Reclose that container to prevent contamination.

Tips to Help Your Customers Help Themselves

- ✓ Stack single-service articles (SSA), such as plates, bowls, cups and containers bottom up for easy removal so customers don't touch the eating surface of another person's container. If the SSA are stacked rims up, they can easily become contaminated.
- ✓ Reload utensil dispensers with the forks, knives and spoons all facing handles up to protect the eating surfaces of the utensils.
- ✓ Lay out only those single-service articles needed for that particular meal.
- ✓ Unload cups from their plastic wrapping without touching the drinking surfaces of the cups.
- ✓ Don't overload cup dispensers. To avoid contamination, don't touch the drinking edge or inside of the cups.

Tips for Handling SSA

- ✓ Protect the eating surfaces of containers and utensils by not touching those surfaces.
- ✓ Handle containers as little as possible.
 - To do this, work off the top of the stack of disposable plates, bowls, cups, containers and keep the stacks neat.
- ✓ Hold cups and bowls by the side or bottom, keeping fingers away from any food-contact surfaces.
- ✓ Handle forks, knives and spoons by the handles only. Individually wrapped utensils eliminate this problem.
- ✓ Discard any SSA that has been contaminated by touch or other exposure.

Tips for Cleaning Up

Your critical task, to ensure sanitary conditions, does not end when the meal is over. Properly disposing of single-service articles is the final step in sanitation.

- ✓ Remember, these are single-service articles for single use. Never reuse single-service articles, even if they appear to be clean or cleanable.
- ✓ During cleanup, avoid touching soiled surfaces.
 - Promptly remove dirty disposable items and food from eating areas.
 - Collect waste in plastic bags or in containers with a plastic lining.
 - If you have a recycling program, follow the instructions for recycling.
- ✓ Secure waste in tightly closed garbage containers.
 - These containers should be removed promptly to an outside container.
 - Make sure that the lid is firmly closed to control pests and prevent litter.

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