



It's Time for Spring Cleaning! By Mary Ann Platt, President & CEO, CNS/FoodSafe™

Spring Cleaning is a traditional way to celebrate the end of winter. But did you know that it's also a great opportunity to improve your overall food safety practices and your bottom line?



Coolers are a natural place to start. Discard any expired product or anything that's questionable. Clean and sanitize all shelving and interiors of the units, including walls, floors and ceilings. Make sure all lights have undamaged shields, and clean any shields that have condensate or mold. Take this opportunity to "zone" the coolers to ensure that Potentially Hazardous Food (PHF) is stored to prevent cross contamination. Organize so that raw PHF is not stored over Ready to Eat items, and stored with lowest to highest required cooking temperatures from top to bottom. This will ensure adequate bacteria kill occurs in the event of cross contamination. In other words, cooked and Ready to Eat foods on top, then fish and seafood, beef and pork (check local code), then ground beef, and raw chicken on the bottom. Insulate compressor lines in to prevent dripping condensate from causing product contamination. Also remember that all food needs to be stored at least six inches above the floor.

All food products should be clearly labeled and dated to ensure proper rotation, including items in inner bags that are removed from original cases. Use a secondary date when transferring PHF from freezers to be thawed in coolers. Keeping a close eye on shelf life rotation and PARS will help with your overall inventory management and reduce spoilage costs. Internal thermometers should be placed in all walk-in and reach-in coolers and freezers. Keep temperature logs for all units and record temperatures at least twice a day to monitor operation. This will alert you to potential trouble and allow you to react in time to safely save your food.

Don't forget the Dry Storage area. It's essential to keep this area clean for pest control. Be sure to clean exteriors of bulk bins and lexans, and label and date all when you are transferring foods from their original containers. This will help with shelf life management as well as ensure traceability in the event of a product recall.

This season is the perfect time to be sure that you have sound cleaning schedules in place. Organize the work on Daily, Weekly, and Monthly schedules. Post these in work areas with responsibilities defined. Always be sure to follow "clean as you go" routines that include cleaning and sanitizing food contact surfaces such as cutting boards and foodservice equipment like slicers, mixers and can openers that have both food contact and non-food contact surfaces after use. Be sure you have a current Material Safety Data Sheet Manual for all chemicals that you use. Also be sure to have your chemicals properly labeled and stored away from food and foodservice equipment.



Shaking off those winter blues can be refreshing and invigorating. Let's harness some of that energy to "spring" into cleaner, safer operations that guarantee a great guest experience!