

Tips for Conducting Food Inspections:

Review Documents BEFORE Conducting an Inspection

- Review past inspection reports. It helps you detect patterns of non-compliance/repeated violations, lack of Active Managerial Control.
- Review any HACCP or Time as a Public Health Temperature Control plans.
- Review menu/food list online or on-file. It helps you identify high-risk foods, high risk processes & operational steps that often go unevaluated.



What to prepare for an inspection?

- Grab proper equipment depending on the type of establishment, such as:
 - Calibrated thermometers
 - Testing strips (chlorine, quaternary & iodophor)
 - Irreversible temperature device/temperature strips
 - Alcohol swabs
 - pH strips (with increments of 0.3)
 - Flashlight
 - ID & business cards.



What to prepare for an inspection?

- For paper inspections forms, complete forms ahead of time (Name of the establishment, address, etc.)
- For electronic inspection software, check if the establishment information is correct.
- Do not wear jewelry, except for a plain wedding band
- Have a head cover: baseball cap, hairnet, or equivalent.



Remember: you are setting a good example to the food operators.

At the Beginning of Inspection

- Introduce yourself, state the purpose of the visit, present your credentials & request permission to conduct inspection from the person in charge (PIC).
- It is always encouraged to either have the PIC accompany the Inspector during the inspection so that necessary corrections & training can be implemented.
- Ask for the menu/food list & take it with you as you enter the kitchen.

At the Beginning of Inspection

- Wash your hands (great opportunity to check if hand washing sink is properly equipped and its location) and ask PIC specific questions about what is being done:
 - Are you cooking or preparing anything right now? Are you reheating anything?
 - Do you have any leftovers from last night? (if AM inspection)
 - Did you prepare anything this morning that would be in the cooler now? (if PM inspection).
- Conduct a quick walk-through.

During the Walk-through


- Walk in one direction—observe what is being done, jot down notes if needed, peek in ovens & coolers, ask questions to determine what is being done.
 - Are they receiving TCS foods?
 - Do you see any large/deep containers of TCS foods in the walk-in?
- Goal is to determine the critical processes being conducted.



Tips for Conducting Food Inspections:

During the Inspection


- Prioritize your inspection time & determine inspection flow based on the inspection report review, your observations during the walk-through, the responses to your questions, & the menu review.
- Make adjustments as necessary as you encounter new situations.
- Ask open-ended questions.
 - What are your cleaning procedures for food contact surfaces?



During the Inspection

Remember the top 5 risk factors contributing to foodborne illnesses:

1. Poor Personal Hygiene
2. Improper Holding Temperatures
3. Improper Cooking Temperatures
4. Food from Unsafe Sources
5. Contaminated Equipment / Cross-Contamination




When determining on-site corrections, always explain the reason behind it & bring it back to the risk factors of foodborne illness.

During the Inspection

- AVOID using infrared thermometers for measuring hot or cold holding temperatures as surface temperature will not provide an accurate assessment of holding temperatures.
 - Does the staff have food thermometers readily accessible?
 - Does the staff know the correct hot/cold holding temperatures?
- For hot holding, carefully stir hot food before taking its temperature for an accurate result.

During the Inspection

- PIC should correct violations of a Priority Item or Priority Foundation at the time of inspection.
- Consider the nature of the potential hazard involved & the complexity of the corrective action needed not to exceed:
 - **Priority items:** 72 hours after the inspection.
 - **Priority Foundation Items:** 10 calendar days after the inspection.
 - **Core Items:** no more than 90 calendar days.




During the Inspection

- Make sure the observation is describing the violation and not the correction.
 - “Meat slicer blade observed pitted. Repair meat slicer blade”. Not “Repair meat slicer”.
- Document the location where the violations were observed during the inspection.
- Make sure any corrective actions, discussion with PIC are documented in the report.
- Limit the use of pronouns and acronyms.
- Take photos, if needed.

Remember: If it’s not documented, it never happened.

Ending the Inspection

- Review the inspection report with PIC and communicate the next steps: re-inspection date, cease & desist procedures, create a plan of correction.



After the Inspection

- Share appropriate guides, resources and training opportunities with PIC.
- Follow up on requested Risk Control Plans, corrective actions, repair/replace equipment documentation, etc.

