

Food Contact Surfaces

One important safeguard against foodborne illnesses is to ensure that food contact surfaces of equipment and utensils are clean, sanitized, and in good repair. What does this mean for your establishment?

Definitions:

- **Food contact surface** is the surface of equipment or utensils which food may come into contact with.
- **Equipment** is an object used in the operation such as an oven, vent-a-hood, freezer, refrigerator, table, sink, slicer, mixer, dishwasher, etc.
- **Utensils** are instruments, objects, or containers used to work with food such as a salad bowl, rolling pin, knife, fork, spoon, spatula, etc.
- **Clean** is visibly free from dirt, contamination, and debris.
- **Sanitizing** is the use of heat and/or chemicals on cleaned food contact surfaces to reduce disease microorganisms.



Under the Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER), food establishments are required to do the following as it pertains to food contact surfaces of equipment and utensils:

Characteristics of Equipment/Utensils

- Equipment and utensils shall be: safe, durable, corrosion resistant, nonabsorbent, smooth, easily cleanable, resistant to pitting, crazing, scratching, scouring, and distortion and able to withstand repeated ware-washing.
- No copper or copper alloys (e.g. brass) shall be used as food contact surfaces. No galvanized metal with acidic foods, no sponges, no lead, no solder, and no wood, except hard maple or close-grained wood.
- No glass thermometers should be used unless they are encased to contain breakage.



Cleaning and Sanitizing of Equipment/Utensils

Equipment and utensils shall be clean to sight and touch and sanitized:

- Before each use with a different type of food (raw meats, raw ready-to-eat foods, raw fruits/vegetables, potentially hazardous foods)
- Before using or storing a food temperature measuring device
- At any time during the operation when contamination may have occurred
- Every four hours, or more frequently when working with potentially hazardous foods, unless maintained at temperatures set forth in the details of the TFER



Common Food Contact Surface Violations

- Reuse of single-service containers
- Calcium buildup in ware-washers
- Rusted/corroded pots and pans
- Grease buildup on stoves/ovens
- Deeply scarred or rough cutting boards
- Dripping of grease under vent-a-hoods
- Mold in ice machines and fountain drink dispensers
- Food debris inside surfaces of refrigerators
- Food debris on wares such as bowls, knives and spoons
- Cracked, broken or burned utensils and food containers