

A Guide to Food Manufacturers: Salads

Salads are mixtures of minimally processed ready-to-eat vegetables with or without dressing. Other common ingredients are fruits, poultry, meat, seafood, egg, pasta, herbs, nuts or cooked vegetables. Salads are usually served cold. As the ingredients are not cooked and the preparation requires a lot of handling, the risk will be largely increased if the salads are not handled properly. To ensure the safety of salads, food handlers should be alert to the possible food safety problems and take appropriate measures in the production. Food handlers should adopt the control measures as identified in the following.



Purchase and receipt

Problems: Presence of harmful bacteria, chemical and foreign materials.

Control:

1. Purchase raw materials from reputable and approved source.
2. Inspect raw materials on arrival to ensure that
 - there are no signs of contamination or damage to the raw materials;
 - chilled items (e.g. meat, seafood and cut vegetables and fruits) are delivered at 4°C or below and frozen items at frozen state and are free from observable evidence of temperature abuse.

Storage

Problems: Growth of harmful bacteria and cross-contamination.

Control:

1. Store deliveries immediately and at proper temperatures (chilled items at 4°C or below; frozen items at -18°C or below).
2. Practice first-in-first-out stock rotation.
3. Keep raw materials covered/wrapped until use.
4. Store ready-to-eat and raw foods separately.

Preparation

Problems: Presence of harmful bacteria in raw materials, growth of harmful bacteria and cross-contamination.

Control:

1. Cook all ingredients (e.g. eggs, chicken and beef) thoroughly.
2. Use pasteurised eggs or egg products to prepare salad dressings.
3. When washing vegetables and fruits, pay attention to the followings:
 - i. wash them thoroughly and, as far as practicable, in a sink exclusively for this use.
 - ii. replace water at a sufficient frequency to prevent spreading of microbial contaminants.
 - iii. choose appropriate disinfectants and follow manufacturers' instructions (e.g. methods, quantities specified, etc.) if disinfectants are used.
4. Store salad dressings at 4°C or below once their packages are opened.
5. Keep finished products, which are not for immediate consumption, at 4°C or below.
6. Avoid holding chilled ingredients and finished products at above 4°C for more than two hours.
7. Label prepackaged salad with a "use-by" date and a statement of storage condition.
8. Use separate equipment and utensils to handle ready-to-eat and raw foods to avoid cross-contamination.
9. Keep equipment and utensils clean and in good condition.
10. Maintain good personal hygiene (e.g. wash hands frequently, wear clean protective clothing, etc.) at all times.

Distribution and display

Problems: Growth of harmful bacteria and cross-contamination.

Control:

1. Distribute and display finished products in a proper manner and at 4°C or below to protect them from contamination and deterioration.
2. Distribute and sell finished products in a first-in-first-out basis.

Self-serve salad bars

Problems: Growth of harmful bacteria and cross-contamination.

Control:

1. Display salad ingredients in a proper manner and at 4°C or below to protect them from contamination and deterioration.
2. Provide sufficient number of tongs or ladles with long handles and replace them with clean ones when appropriate (e.g. at 4 hour interval). Remove contaminated tongs and ladles (e.g. those dropped onto the floor) from the salad bar area immediately.
3. Display ingredients in small portions and avoid topping up with fresh ones.
4. Discard leftovers.
5. Supervise the salad bar area by appropriately trained staff to protect the food against contamination by customers.

Management system

Implement a preventive food safety management system (such as the HACCP-based Food Safety Plan) to identify and control food safety problems at every stage of the food manufacturing process.

Enquiry

For related information, please contact the Communication Resource Unit.

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