Cleaning and sanitising

As a food business, cleaning and sanitising are important ways to prevent harmful bacteria from contaminating food and making it unsafe to eat

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Cleaning and sanitising are not the same:

- **Cleaning** is the process of using detergent and water to remove visible dirt, grease, and food waste. Cleaning alone will not kill bacteria.
- **Sanitising** is the process of killing food poisoning bacteria (what you cannot see), by using heat and/or chemicals. Sanitising will kill bacteria and spores and reduce the numbers present to a safe level.

It is not an option to use either a detergent or a sanitiser at a food business. All equipment, utensils and food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitised. Cleaning and sanitising should be done as separate processes, however you must always clean items *before* you sanitise them. You cannot tell if equipment and surfaces have been sanitised just by looking at it, so it is important to ensure equipment designed for sanitising is maintained and works properly.

You should never mix detergents and sanitisers as this could change the chemical properties of both solutions, and result in neither chemical working properly.

Cleaning

Effective Cleaning

Using hot water for cleaning is likely to be more effective than cleaning with cold water. This is because hot water will help remove grease and fats, and some cleaning chemicals need to be used with water at certain temperatures. You should always check the instructions on the cleaning chemicals you use for any specific requirements. Water between 50°C – 60°C is usually recommended for cleaning.

Dishwashers are more effective for cleaning than washing by hand and a commercial standard dishwasher should be used in preference to a domestic grade dishwasher.

Sanitising

Effective Sanitising

Sanitisers must be used at the correct concentrations, temperatures and contact times otherwise they will not be effective and may not sufficiently sanitise surfaces. You should carefully read the manufacturer's instructions to understand what the requirements are for the type of sanitiser you are using in your business.

All surfaces to be sanitised should be covered by the sanitising solution. This may require equipment to be dismantled (such as mixers, blenders and slicers) where surfaces are difficult to reach.

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You should also make sure surfaces are thoroughly dried after sanitising before equipment is re-used. Air drying is the preferred method of drying, however if you need to use a tea towel to dry, you should ensure they are not used repeatedly without washing and drying between uses.

What kinds of sanitisers can I use?

The use of chemicals is the most common method for sanitising equipment and food contact surfaces, however heat can also be used. The table below lists examples of common sanitisers.

Sanitiser	Use/Dilution	Air dry	Comments
Bleach	For **cold water (minimum 13°C)**, add 10ml commercial bleach (10% chlorine) or 25ml household bleach (4% chlorine) to 10L water For **warm water (minimum 38°C)**, add 5ml commercial bleach (1 teaspoon) or 12.5ml household bleach to 10L water	Yes (unless a stronger solution is used)	Contact time is usually 10–30 seconds but check the manufacturer's instructions Discard diluted bleach after 24 hours Only plain, unscented bleach should be used Can be corrosive.
Commercial sanitiser e.g., Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QUAT)	As per manufacturers instructions	As per manufacturers instructions	Check that the sanitsier is food grade (safe for food contact surfaces) Non-corrosive.
70% alcohol solutions	700ml in 300ml of water/saturate items with 70% alcohol	Yes	Air dries rapidly Caution: flammable.
Hot water	Water must reach 77°C for at least 30 seconds	Yes	Commercial dishwasher is recommended for Occupational Health and Safety reasons.

Please Note: *This table is to be used as a guide only. For questions about specific products please contact your supplier or manufacturer of the chemical or refer to the Material Safety Data Sheet for commercial products.*

How often should I sanitise?

Food contact surfaces and equipment should be cleaned and sanitised after every use, however if this is not practical because of the type of equipment in use, sanitising should occur at least every four hours.

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Where do I purchase a sanitiser?

Household bleach can be purchased at a supermarket. Other sanitisers can be purchased from a chemical supplier in your area. You can search for 'cleaning products and supplies' online or see if your existing supply company provides sanitising products.

Diluting

There are various methods you can use to dilute sanitisers.

When the amount of sanitiser is less than 3ml, a syringe without the needle is the easiest way to measure out the sanitiser. Most pharmacies will stock these. Where the amount of sanitsier is more than 3ml, a measuring cup is the easiest method. Remember, don't re-use measuring cups used to dilute chemicals for other purposes.

Diluted sanitisers often have a shorter shelf-life than the concentrated form, so you should be able to track when diluted sanitiser needs to be replaced with a fresh batch. As a minimum, diluted bleach must be discarded after 24 hours of dilution.

Do commercial dishwashers sanitise equipment?

Equipment going through a commercial dishwasher can be considered heat sanitised if the dishwasher has a sanitisation rinse cycle where the water is heated above 77°C (usually the longest hottest setting).

Are organic sanitsiers available?

Yes. Sanitisers which have the following active ingredients are considered organic:

- Peracetic Acid
- Hydrogen Peroxide
- Organic Acids
- 70% Alcohol solutions that do not contain Quaternary Ammonium Compounds

For further information go you can access the *Australian Organic Standard 2006* at http://www.bfa.com.au.

Alternative sanitisers

Alternative sanitisers such as vinegar, lemon juice and methylated spirits are not accepted as a food grade sanitiser, unless you have been able to confirm through testing that the concentration, pH, temperature, contact time, are verified to be effective. You will need to provide evidence from a registered laboratory to substantiate these claims before using these products for sanitising.

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Disinfectants

Disinfectants are different to sanitisers. Disinfectants are strong, common household cleaning chemicals which are more suitable for cleaning toilets and floors than food contact surfaces. Disinfectants must not be used as sanitisers. Food contact surfaces are not required to be disinfected.

Outbreaks

Please note that in a declared outbreak situation, only bleach (sodium hypochlorite) sanitisers can be used, at concentrations specified in Department of Health published gastroenteritis outbreak management guidelines. This is because non-chlorine-based products have generally not been shown to be effective against norovirus.

Contact us

If you have any questions regarding this document, please contact Merri-bek City Council's Environmental Health Unit via the email or phone number below.

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