

FEA Guide to COVID-19 Kitchen Best Practice

As we begin operating in the new normal, FEA has put together guidelines covering best practice in the kitchen for foodservice operators. The guidance covers those areas that are directly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and are based on various sources, several of which FEA contributed to. FEA cannot be held responsible for any costs or issues arising from following the guidelines. The guidelines below are advisory and do NOT cover the established guidelines i.e. food safety, health and safety, etc. All foodservice operators should follow the guidance and regulations from the respective government departments and agencies.

Key concerns are cleanliness, minimising the risk of infection or contamination, and maintaining social distancing.

So how can we operate a commercial kitchen under such conditions – especially busy kitchens that weren't designed with social distancing in mind. Here are the FEA guidelines. Clearly they are for guidance only – not everything will be possible in every kitchen.

People, staff and visitors

- Workers should record their personal temperature on a daily basis before starting work and should follow current government guidelines if it is not normal.
- Encourage staff to wash hands often, for at least 20 seconds.
- Limit access to the kitchen to as few people as possible. Don't allow unnecessary visits.
- Organise workflow and handover points so that serving staff don't enter the kitchen.
- Schedule essential visits from outsiders, such as service engineers, at night and avoid any overlap of people.
- Minimise interaction between kitchen staff and other workers, including when they are on breaks.
- Organise shifts, so that the same workers work together, restricting the number of workers interacting with each other.

- Provide clear guidance to suppliers, delivery drivers and any other essential visitors in respect of social distancing, hygiene requirements, etc., BEFORE they arrive.
- Introduce time slots for deliveries so that handling can be planned and managed safely.

Kitchen layout

- Provide floor markings to signal current social distancing measures.
- Introduce a one-way traffic flow to minimise contact.
- Consider using screens to help separate staff/work stations.
- Restrict access to stores such as pantries, coldrooms, fridges and freezers. Consider a rota, so that individuals have set access times. Ensure areas are cleaned regularly.
- Provide signage to encourage good hygiene standards such as frequent washing of hands.
- If possible, create work stations at social distances. Ideally everything that the chef needs will be at their own work-station – prep, cooking equipment, refrigeration, and so on.
- Where there are internal doors within the kitchen, if possible wedge them open. This will help minimise touchpoints. Do NOT wedge open fire doors or refrigeration or coldroom doors.
- Provide more waste facilities and arrange frequent rubbish collection.

Hygiene and staff

- Encourage staff to wash hands regularly. For at least 20 seconds.
- Encourage staff to regularly clean and sanitise their work area, especially any touchpoints such as prep areas, handles and control panels.
- Minimise touchpoints and handover points with staff, for example when handing plates to kitchen staff, or when accepting deliveries.
- Minimise handling of foods – for example, staff should use tongs to insert products such as toasties into high-speed ovens, and to take them out once cooked.
- If serving food and drink is not the primary function of the site, only do so if you can do it effectively and safely, following a thorough risk assessment.
- Have bins to collect used overalls, aprons, towels etc.

Hygiene and equipment

- Where possible install germicidal UVC lamps (as used to eradicate SARS).
- Use an automated fogging device to deliver sanitizing solution to surfaces if possible, (as used in healthcare).
- Only one person should work on each piece of cooking, refrigeration or warewashing equipment to avoid cross contamination.
- Look after equipment to minimise service call outs and engineer visits.
- Regularly clean and sanitise all equipment and appliances, inside and out. Set up a regime to ensure this is carried out to a schedule.
- Regularly take out and clean your appliances' shelving, drawers, racking, etc. Often they can be put through a commercial dishwasher.
- Chefs should avoid sharing utensils, tools, pots, pans, etc.
- Wash hands between loading and unloading a warewasher.
- Where possible use self-cleaning equipment and equipment that can be operated without the use of hands (i.e. with an elbow).
- If your equipment is connected to the Internet, exploit its potential to reduce touchpoints. For example, recipes can be uploaded and programmed remotely and HACCP data logs can be downloaded with no need to even enter the kitchen.
- If your kitchen has modern, programmable appliances such as combi ovens, exploit their ability to cook without supervision. This will reduce touchpoints and free up staff for other tasks. Using pre-set programs will also help temporary or unskilled staff to work efficiently.
- Ensure all storage containers, trays, pans and lids are thoroughly cleaned – using the dishwasher where possible.
- Check the ventilation system is operating correctly and have it serviced regularly.

The Foodservice Equipment Association (FEA) is the authoritative voice of the foodservice equipment industry, representing over 200 companies who supply, service and maintain all types of commercial catering equipment - from utensils to full kitchen schemes. For more information on FEA visit www.fea.org.uk