

SINGLE-SERVICE ARTICLES

Public Health Division | Food & Lodging | 600 East Boulevard Ave, Dept. 325 | Bismarck, ND 58505-0250 | hhs.nd.gov | 701-328-1291

GUIDELINES FOR USING SINGLE-SERVICE ARTICLES IN FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS



Most foodborne illnesses are caused by mishandling food. But they can also be caused by mishandling utensils, including cups, plates and cutlery. Bacteria and viruses may survive on utensils if utensils are not cleaned and sanitized properly, or if they are improperly handled by workers. This can cause those who eat from them to become ill.

In addition to making sure workers' hands have been cleaned with soap and water, proper handling of these single-service articles (SSA) is crucial. Manufacturers of SSA have worked hard to ensure that their products are sanitary. Now it is up to you to keep those products sanitary to protect the health of your customers.

Tips for Storing Single-Service Articles

- ✓ Store single-service articles (SSA) at least six inches above the floor in a clean, dry location, where they will not be exposed to splash, dust or other contamination.
- ✓ Keep SSA away from pesticides, detergents and cleaning compounds.
- ✓ Don't touch the eating surfaces of unwrapped containers, cups or plates.
- ✓ Keep SSA off the floor and away from garbage, restrooms or open areas.
- ✓ Remove only SSA that are needed and keep the rest in the original storage container. Reclose that container to prevent contamination.

Tips to Help Your Customers Help Themselves

- ✓ Stack single-service articles (SSA), such as plates, bowls, cups and containers bottom up for easy removal so customers don't touch the eating surface of another person's container. If the SSA are stacked rims up, they can easily become contaminated.
- ✓ Reload utensil dispensers with the forks, knives and spoons all facing handles up to protect the eating surfaces of the utensils.
- ✓ Lay out only those single-service articles needed for that particular meal.
- ✓ Unload cups from their plastic wrapping without touching the drinking surfaces of the cups.
- ✓ Don't overload cup dispensers. To avoid contamination, don't touch the drinking edge or inside of the cups.

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Guidelines for Service Meals

The "rush" -- whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner -- brings with it greater pressure and consumer demand. One of the most important aspects of providing good service is continuing to maintain a healthy, bacteria-free foodservice area at all times.

Common mistakes when serving meals include:

1. Touching the eating surface of a container.
2. Touching the eating edge of a fork, knife or spoon.
3. Using a container that has dropped on the floor.

Simple Sanitation Guidelines

When using single-service articles, remember to:

- ✓ Handle containers as little as possible. To do this, work off the top of the stack of disposable plates, bowls, cups, containers and keep the stacks neat.
- ✓ Hold cups and bowls by the side or bottom, keeping fingers away from any food-contact surfaces.
- ✓ Handle forks, knives and spoons by the handles only. Individually wrapped utensils eliminate this problem.

Tips for Cleaning Up

Your critical task -- to ensure sanitary conditions -- does not end when the meal is over. Properly disposing of single-service articles is the final step in sanitation.

- ✓ Remember, these are *single-service articles for single use*. Never reuse single-service articles, even if they appear to be clean or cleanable.
- ✓ During cleanup, avoid touching soiled surfaces. Promptly remove dirty disposable items and food from eating areas. Collect waste in plastic bags or in containers with a plastic lining. If you have a recycling program, follow the instructions for recycling.
- ✓ Secure waste in tightly closed garbage containers. These containers should be removed promptly to an outside container. Make sure that the lid is firmly closed to control pests and prevent litter.



As a foodservice manager or worker, a very important part of your job is protecting the health of your customers. When your aim is sanitation and you take the necessary precautions to keep single-service articles sanitary, you know you've achieved your goal.