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# MANAGING UNIQUE FOOD SAFETY RISKS OF LOCAL SUPPLIERS

## 5 TIPS TO ENSURE QUALITY & PROTECT CUSTOMERS

Across every demographic, diners today want to know where their food comes from—and they increasingly prefer local sources. Two-thirds of U.S. consumers say they're more likely to choose a restaurant the offers locally sourced items.<sup>1</sup> That percentage is even higher among younger demographics.<sup>2</sup> From full-service to fast-food, fresh-and-local is becoming an essential component of a restaurant's brand.



## FRESH & LOCAL CREATES NEW FOOD SAFETY CHALLENGES

As restaurants look for new opportunities to partner with local suppliers, they're encountering new logistical challenges that strain their food safety and food quality programs.

### More Complex Supply Chains

Restaurants are expanding the number of suppliers they work with. Instead of working with a single trusted vendor for all ingredients, a restaurant may now work with dozens. This increases the number of potential food safety fail points in the supply chain.

### Smaller Suppliers Often Lack Institutional Food Safety

"Local" typically means smaller, and smaller operations often lack the resources to have the dedicated food safety teams and robust food safety programs of top national food service suppliers.

### Fresh Items Inherently Have Higher Food Safety Risk

Fresh produce is the biggest source of food safety incidents in the U.S. In addition to food safety, restaurants also need to minimize spoilage and waste. Incorporating more fresh items from more local vendors means an inherently increased risk of food safety and spoilage issues.



**3 in 4**  
**CUSTOMERS**  
**WOULD NEVER VISIT**  
(OR NEVER RETURN TO) A RESTAURANT  
IMPLICATED IN A FOOD SAFETY INCIDENT.<sup>4</sup>

**HOW CAN YOU ADD LOCAL FLAVORS  
WITHOUT PUTTING YOUR BUSINESS AT RISK?**

## STAND BEHIND YOUR CAUSE—AND BE TRANSPARENT

More than anything, diners today want to know where their food comes from. Following the tips listed at right can help you open your doors to local suppliers while mitigating food safety risks. But whatever mix of local suppliers or larger-scale institutional suppliers you rely upon, the most important thing is to show customers how your sourcing decisions ultimately serve your goals around sustainability, wellness and exceptional quality.

Visit [Cleanwithkeystone.com](http://Cleanwithkeystone.com) for more simple tips for driving quality and food safety—without big costs or burdens.

1. <http://www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/soi>  
2. Ibid.  
3. [http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2013/12/studies-on-food-safety-at-restaurants-produce-some-unsettling-data/#.Wos\\_4pM-ey5](http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2013/12/studies-on-food-safety-at-restaurants-produce-some-unsettling-data/#.Wos_4pM-ey5)  
4. [www.checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The\\_Financial\\_Impact\\_of\\_Getting\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Wrong.pdf](http://www.checkit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The_Financial_Impact_of_Getting_Food_Safety_Wrong.pdf)  
5. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp>  
6. [https://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/foodbeattie\\_BE1F595B4928A.pdf](https://www.agmrc.org/media/cms/foodbeattie_BE1F595B4928A.pdf)

# 5 TIPS FOR BUILDING FOOD SAFETY INTO LOCAL SOURCING

## 1 GET TO KNOW YOUR SOURCES

It's the natural first step: Make sure you're working with reputable suppliers.

- **Don't mistake local for safe:** Just because there are fewer touch points from the farm to your kitchen doesn't mean food is inherently safer.
- **Review a supplier's food safety program:** Make sure there are documented protocol and standards for things like pest control, sanitation and hand hygiene.
- **Take tips from the food safety experts:** The USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Handling Practices (GHPs) provide a great starting point for how to evaluate a supplier.<sup>5</sup>

## 2 MAKE STAFF YOUR QUALITY GATEKEEPERS

After you've selected quality suppliers, ensure sub-par produce never gets in the door.

- **Create produce quality standards:** Train employees to look for signs of spoilage or pest infestation/damage.
- **Be strict about temperature:** Never accept produce (especially leafy greens like lettuce and cabbage) that arrive above 41°F.
- **Inspect the delivery vessel:** Make sure the truck is sanitary and properly refrigerated, and check shipping containers for damage, dirt or signs of pest infestation.
- **Document everything for complete traceability:** Record every detail of every delivery: The time, temperature, appearance; the name of the driver; the expiration or best-by date on every item; etc.

## 3 RE-EMPHASIZE PROPER STORAGE & PREP TO MINIMIZE SPOILAGE/WASTE

Frequent food safety re-training is critical to keeping food safety top-of-mind.

- **If it's on ice, keep it on ice:** Raw produce (cut or whole) that arrives on ice should be kept on ice until it's ready to be prepped and served.
- **Keep produce below 41°F:** Make sure all fresh items are stored below 41°F to prevent growth of pathogens.
- **Separate proteins from produce:** Raw meat, poultry and seafood should be stored in a completely separate area from fresh produce to minimize the risk of cross-contamination.
- **Sanitize before you prep—every time:** Make sure you have the right cleaning chemicals to sanitize knives, food prep utensils, cutting boards and other food prep surfaces.

## 4 CLEAN HOUSE, CLEAN HANDS, CLEAN PRODUCE

Regardless of where ingredients come from, comprehensive facility cleaning and staff hygiene are the foundational elements of any food safety program.

- **Clean from the ground up:** Pathogens move quickly from the floor to the cutting board—a dropped utensil, a container temporarily placed on the ground, or an employee bending down to re-tie a shoe.
- **Be vigilant about handwashing:** A CDC study found that only 1 in 4 restaurant workers follow proper handwashing protocol. Make sure high-performance hand hygiene chemicals (soaps and sanitizers) are conveniently available and signage on hand-washing technique is prominently displayed.
- **Ask cleaning partner to conduct food safety audits:** Find weak points in your food safety program proactively. Your cleaning chemical vendor should be able to offer a consultative audit, identifying potential issues and recommending solutions.

## 5 TAKE A BIG-PICTURE VIEW ON SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLNESS

Food supply chains are extremely complex. Emphasizing sustainability and customer wellness isn't always a matter of moving to local sources.

- **Local isn't always sustainable:** Large-scale food supply operations often take advantage of significant economies of scale in both the production and transport of food. Taken as a whole, it can sometimes be more sustainable and environmentally friendly to source several ingredients from a single institutional supplier, compared to multiple smaller suppliers.
- **Local isn't always "better for you":** Research shows consumers think "local" means "healthy" and "safe."<sup>6</sup> As demonstrated above, this isn't necessarily the case. Sourcing from local suppliers can sometimes make it more difficult to ensure the quality and safety of ingredients.