

Keep Your Kitchen Ready for the Health Inspector

No one wants to go to a restaurant that didn't pass its health inspection, but have you considered your own kitchen? Would your kitchen pass inspection?

Clean kitchens provide more than something pretty to look at. Though people may not be able to see, smell, or taste viruses and germs, they are present. These bacteria can spread easily between hands, utensils, cutting boards, sinks, countertops and food. It's important to keep food surfaces, surroundings and food preparers clean.

By definition, cleaning removes particles, including dirt and food, from surfaces. Cleaning usually involves washing surfaces with soap and water, rinsing with clean water, and air-drying or using a paper towel for drying.

Besides cleaning, you might consider sanitizing kitchen surfaces, including countertops, cutting boards, refrigerator drawers and other surfaces. Bacteria, including Salmonella, E. coli and Listeria, may be spread from contaminated hands to food or from contaminated surfaces, such as cutting boards, knives, and other equipment to food.

Sanitizing takes cleaning one step farther. Sanitizing reduces or eliminates germs, such as Salmonella, on surfaces. After cleaning the surface, such as a cutting board, spray the surface with the sanitizer of choice or prepare a larger amount in a sink and immerse the item. Allow the surface to air-dry.

You can make your own sanitizing solution by mixing one teaspoon of chlorine bleach in one gallon of warm water.

After preparing one food item wash utensils, cutting boards, dishes, and countertops with hot, soapy water before preparing for the next food item. Use separate cutting boards for meats,

poultry, and vegetables. Replace boards when they become worn with cuts and grooves, as those cuts can harbor bacteria.

Hand washing is extremely important. Hands should be washed with hot soapy water to prevent the spread of bacteria. Hand washing should occur before preparing food and after various activities: using the bathroom, changing diapers, sneezing, coughing, touching a cut or open sore, playing outside, and playing with pets.

When washing hands, scrubbing should last for at least 20 seconds. To make sure you hit the 20 second mark, sing the "Happy Birthday" song two times.

#

Sarah Purcell is a Nebraska Extension Educator for Otoe County and Southeast Nebraska. She can be reached as 402-269-2301 or via email at spurcell2@unl.edu.