

Safe Ice Production

Ice is widely used in food retail premises and hotels to cool drinks and food display units. When prepared from potable water, i.e. tap water from a utility company, ice should be free from bacteria such as E.coli, other coliforms and enterococci. If maintained in strict hygienic conditions ice should remain at a high microbiological quality. Failure to do this, however, can result in ice becoming contaminated with potentially harmful bacteria. This can easily happen when it is stored and served from open ice buckets.

Microbiological studies have highlighted several factors associated with poor ice quality. For example, ice produced in freezers using trays was of a poorer quality than ice produced in a purpose built ice-making machine. This is because the machine helps to eliminate handling of the product. Likewise, ice stored in bar top containers was more contaminated if meltwater was present due to repeated filling of the container without it being cleaned following repeated use by staff and customers.

Hygienic production of ice

- Ice should be made from water that is of potable drinking water quality. This can be achieved by connecting a tap from the mains supply directly to an ice making machine.
- Ice machines and freezers should be sited away from potential sources of contamination. They should be serviced and cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.
- Ice machines and freezers, including their handles, should be cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis as part of the food premises cleaning regime.
- The use of trays to make ice is not recommended as it involves direct handling which could result in contamination.

Practices, storage and the serving of ice

- Persons dispensing ice from an ice machine or freezer should not scoop it out by hand. A clean and sterile utensil should always be used.
- It is recommended that customers do not serve themselves from ice buckets.
- Scoops and other utensils used to serve or remove ice must be kept clean and stored hygienically when not in use. They should not be made of glass or any other material that may be liable to chip or fragment. Utensil handles should not come into contact with the ice.
- Any ice remaining in ice buckets at the end of the day should be disposed of and not returned to the ice machine or freezer.

Cleaning regimes for utensils, scoops and ice buckets should include appropriate disinfection.