Safe food + Safe Products = Food Safety

"We all want to deliver safe food to our customers but what if you were contaminating your food without even realizing it?"

In 2014 it is expected that all hospitality related businesses should have a food safety programme in place. From a simple written plan to a detailed flow chart, companies and employees must be aware of what they need to do to ensure that the food they sell is safe for human consumption.

Food safety

No one wants to get sick so the industry needs to create a food safety 'chain' of suppliers that work together to deliver food that is safe. Food needs to be free of chemicals (such as pesticides), physical contaminants (like glass) and microorganisms. To manage this, businesses reach out to key organizations such as HACCP (Hazard, Analysis, Critical, Control, Point) who help to create uniform systems for these food safety 'chains' that go all the way from the people who grow the food, through the manufacturers, to the restaurant and all the way to your table.

Training and education programmes are imperative in helping businesses that handle, process or sell potentially hazardous foods to maintain safe food handling practices and protect public health and in turn their businesses reputation.

Food-safe products. **What about the things that food manufacturers buy or use that are NOT food?**
It is important to recognize that focusing on delivering 'safe food' is only part of the equation and that 'non-food' products used in the food production process also have the ability to contaminate food.

Non-food products, materials, equipment and services can have a big impact on the safety of food and on the operation of a food safety program.

In Australia there are strict guidelines and laws surrounding the safety of food and authorities are becoming increasingly stringent on regulating non-food products as well.

In 2013 there were an estimated 5.2 million cases of food poisoning in Australia, many which could have been prevented by using food-safe products and implementing simple procedures. Those most seriously affected were children, the aged and those with poor immune systems, a distressing and costly consequence for both customers and businesses.

What classifies a food-safe product

- Well designed with 'food-safe' characteristics
- Non-toxic
- Easy to clean and easy to handle
- Appropriate for use
- Likely to reduce the risk of any form of contamination
- Designed for a low consequence of error in use
- Contributing to food safety in their use

What classifies a food-safe product?

Products need to be well designed with 'food-safe' characteristics, contain non-toxic materials (or appropriate levels of toxicity), be easy to clean, likely to reduce the risk of any form of contamination and designed for a low consequence of error in use.

The equipment, materials and services selected by food businesses must be 'fit for purpose' – they must work properly, must be free from characteristics that could cause hazards to food safety and must be compatible with food safety programmes.

- Fitness for purpose
- Must not introduce risk
- Must be compatible with food safety programmes

Most businesses have a desire to do the right thing by their customers and aim to purchase food-safe products that minimize the risk of food contamination. Unfortunately due to a lack of regulation

"*Not all products* sourced from an industry supplier are safe"

business are often unaware of which products comply to Australian food-safe standards and which do not.

The misconception

There is a common misconception that all products sourced from an industry supplier are compliant with food safety standards, this unfortunately is not the case. The reality is that shelves are crammed with inferior products that have not been industry tested or are not fit for purpose.

Due to a lack of regulation many new products have crept into the market with a trend towards manufacturers failing to perform due diligence when it comes to research, using cheaper materials and cutting corners. Although this allows many manufacturers to remain cost-competitive it also has the potential to place unsafe products into your workplace

and jeopardize the integrity of your business. Many food industry purchasers intent on buying equipment, materials and services that are safe and suitable for food could be in breach of their own in-house standards without even realising it.

Fortunately for the industry there are several organizations that offer independent assessments to those manufacturers wish to follow protocol by providing platforms that highlight the superior features and benefits of their products in the market.

Organisations such as HACCP play an important role in making sure that manufacturers are aware of critical control points when producing products. They can provide certification and help the industry to understand and classify what a food-safe products are by providing guidelines and in turn assurance to customers.

"HACCP certification is a rigorous process so if a product is labeled with its approval you know it is superior."

Buyer beware!
What can be done to combat this?
The most effective way to combat this is to be aware of what you're buying and to look out for certifications and logos that indicate that the products being purchased are food-safe. HACCP certification is a rigorous process so if a product is labeled with its approval you know it is superior.

There are some simple questions that you can ask your suppliers to ensure that you are buying the best products for your business. Ask them if it is HACCP certified or food-safe? Ask them what features and benefits make this product superior over others? If you are unsure stick with trusted manufacturers and brands that you know comply to food safety standards and don't compromise

on quality. Distributors such as Tomkin Australia pride themselves on offering a broad range of HACCP certified food safe brands and products.

- Be aware of what you're buying
- Look out for certifications such as HACCP
- Ask the right questions
- Stick with distributors and brands that you trust

It doesn't cost more to be safe
Fortunately for businesses it does not cost more to purchase food-safe products in fact by investing in superior quality products, overtime you save money.

Distributors like Tomkin have made a conscious decision work with higher quality materials absorbing the initial research and development costs to offer customers competitive prices. Tomkin chooses not to compromise on quality and offers a one-stop-shop hospitality product solution to the industry.

HACCP ACCREDITED FOOD-SAFE PRODUCTS

- **Chef Inox PP cutting boards**
  Are colour coded and made from tough Polypropylene. They are non-absorbent, stain/aroma resistant and have a high chemical resistance making them durable, hygienic and food-safe.
- **Chef Inox Gastronorm pans**
  Are EU certified and made from food grade 18/10 stainless steel. They feature a minimum gauge of 0.6mm and have reinforced edges to provide a secure fit making them strong, safe and easy to clean.
- **Chef Inox Cookware**
  Are made from superior materials that will not splinter or warp making them a tough and reliable workhorse in the kitchen
- **Chef Inox Pastry Bags**
  Are made from strong Polypropylene making them non-absorbent, stain/aroma resistant and easy to clean
- **IVO knives**
  Are commercially durable knives suited to high usage environments. They are antibacterial, non-allergenic and won't rust
- **JAB Melamine**
  Is made from premium grade melamine. It is stain and aroma resistant and does not contain any harmful chemicals or contaminants

For more information visit tomkin.com.au or HACCP.com.au