



PREVENTING CROSS CONTAMINATION IN YOUR KITCHEN

In early June I was fortunate enough to be part of a tour of the brand new 6 Star Green Star environmentally rated Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC). The tour was organised by the AIFST Victorian Cook Chill group and was held to promote cook chill food and highlight the benefits of a cook chill system. At the end of the tour, the MCEC's Food and Beverage Manager Mr. Frank Burger and Executive Chef Mr. Shaun Bowles prepared an amazing meal emphasizing that with the right produce, attitude and equipment, cook chill food really can be done well. But what struck me most throughout the tour was the kitchen, not the meal at the end.

As an ex-chef with 15 years hands-on industry experience (including two years at the old MECC), plus my time now as a food safety specialist, I have been in many kitchens, but none that have been designed or planned as well as the one at the MCEC. In fact many kitchens that I walk into almost appear an afterthought, with little or no consideration for adequate work flow, OHS procedures, appropriate equipment or location and size of storage facilities.

While we can't all be presented with an open canvas and be allowed to build new kitchens from scratch like Frank and his team were, we can certainly consider many of the preventative aspects that have been implemented in the MCEC.

For a start, the MCEC (and previously as the MECC) is a HACCP Certified facility; the first venue of its type in Australia to reach this certification in 1998. Some of the design features that impressed me included:

- The hygiene station at the entrance to the kitchen.
- Clear and appropriate signage throughout the kitchen.
- A single flow operation, so raw foods and ready to eat products can never cross contaminate each other. This included:
 - A decanting area for cardboard, glass and metal outside the main kitchen.
 - Separate kitchens for preparation, cooking, pastry

and plate up.

- Ovens, blast chillers and cool rooms that could be accessed from both sides.
- The dishwasher area passed through a solid wall, so that the dirty dishes and staff were clearly separated from where the clean dishes were handled and stored.
- Waste disposal chutes that transferred waste hygienically and efficiently to external bins (no wheelie bins going in and out).
- Full traceability control of all incoming and prepared items.
- Purposely sourced equipment for the intended tasks.
- A team of chefs and pantry hands that worked smoothly, efficiently and diligently together (clearly training is important here).

While some of these design features may not be able to be purposely built in your kitchens, the principles of preventing cross contamination that have been implemented certainly can be applied.

Ask yourself what you can do in your kitchens to prevent potential cross contamination, and try and get away from just the colour coded chopping boards as there is so much more you can do.

Eat well. Eat safe!

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P.S. In edition 21 we asked people to send in a list of "unique" cross contamination examples - well the winner with an amazing 70 examples was Fiona Vong, from the Jessica Road Take-Away in Campbellfield, Victoria. I have been in touch with Fiona and her prize is on the way. Are you smarter than Fiona? We shall run the competition again this edition, with the winner receiving either an online enrolment or attendance at one of our Food Safety Supervisor Courses. Email me directly at gavin@gourmetguardian.com.au

P.P.S. All subscribers to our FREE "Food Safety Bulletin" were invited to accompany me on this tour - if you are not subscribed - what else are you missing out on. Go to www.australianfoodsafety.com.au and subscribe NOW!



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