

# WHAT DO YOUR CHEFS GET UP TO BEFORE WORK?



Author Gavin Bucket

What do your chefs get up to before they arrive at work? I don't quite know what the right word is? Am I amazed? Dumbfounded? Awestruck? Confused? Scared? What ever the word is, I cannot believe that twice this week I have been onsite with clients and found their staff were arriving at work in their chef's uniform. Do your kitchen staff do this? Do you understand what the risk is? How many other food businesses allow their staff to arrive at work in their chef's uniform? Are they even aware that it's happening? When investigated, I found that most people that work in kitchens believe that the chef's uniform is designed to protect the chef. While many aspects of a chef's uniform is designed around these OHS requirements (such as the long sleeves, double breasted front, buttons and neckline), the primary purpose of a chef's uniform is to protect the food that you are handling from what is on you and your body. In food safety terms, the uniform is defined as a protective barrier, and as such should be as clean and as hygienic as possible. Why then do kitchen staff wear it to work? Where have they been in the uniform before they arrived at work? What have they been up to? With my food safety mind ticking over, I wonder if they have done any of the following in their uniforms before coming to work:

- Been to the toilet
- Changed a nappy
- Brought the bins in from the night before
- Stopped at a café/supermarket/shopping centre/pet store etc.
- Dropped off something to the tip
- Washed the car
- Been smoking
- Dropped the kids at child care

That being said, the staff that are at work also need to consider controls for their uniforms. How many strip shopping chefs work split shifts, and how many people do you see in the street at 3:30 in the afternoon in the black and white checkered pants? What about when I drive past one of Sydney's premier meat suppliers, and all their staff are outside having lunch, smoking and sitting on the ground in their protective clothing. Or at shopping centres when you go to the toilet and a chef comes out of the cubicle with his

apron still on? Or when I see kitchen staff on public transport in their uniforms? I know people that won't travel on public transport because of the germs that might make them sick. What about the food they are about to handle and then be consumed by 100, 200, 300+ customers? How can this be happening? You should go and find out how many of your staff or team are wearing their uniforms to work. Watch what happens when they have a break. Hang around the toilets and see if they are taking aprons off. That being said, if employers want their staff to get changed when they come to work, they need to make sure they provide adequate facilities such as clean change rooms, lockers for personal items and somewhere to store items that need to be on hangers such as jackets and jumpers. Make sure there are hooks outside the toilet for jackets and aprons to be hung, and provide signage about what you expect your employees to do.

Note: Whenever you enter a kitchen you should have clean protective clothing. In this article I have referred to chef's uniforms, as most of the people that read these magazines are chefs, however the same rules apply for cafés and take aways where staff wear jeans and a t-shirt, waiters aprons, or any other clothing that is your outermost piece. Remember that it's a barrier to protect the food from you!

*Eat well. Eat safe!*

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P.S. In the last article I wrote about the new NSWFA requirements for a Food Safety Supervisor. Our office was inundated with enquiries, mainly from people who did not know that it was now a legal requirement.

Our online training materials that meet the requirements of the NSWFA can be found at <https://Learning.PrimeSkills.com.au/Food-Safety>. The bonus mentioned in the last article still applies. Just put "F4T" on your enrolment.



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