

Detergents Don't Sanitise and Sanitisers Don't Clean

Author Gavin Buckettt

Did you know that? Do you know what a sanitiser is? It's a legal requirement in Australia that all *food contact surfaces* must be cleaned and sanitised, but do you know what your food contact surfaces are? Most kitchens that I'm in consider their plates, cups and utensils as their food contact surfaces, but how many more pieces of equipment do you have in your kitchen that can be considered a food contact surface?

I recently spent two full days and nights in a 4 ½ star international hotel auditing their entire food and beverage operations. While all of their crockery was sanitised through the dishwasher, they'd neglected to consider all of the items in their pot wash area.

Can you imagine everything that gets hand washed in the pot wash area of a hotel of this size? Probably the same items you wash in your pot wash area.

These include:

- Chopping boards
- Cooking utensils (including tongs, spoons, whisks, spatulas etc.)
- Cake racks
- Pastry items including cake tins, dariole moulds and silicon baking mats
- Pots
- Pans
- Frypans
- Bowls
- Tote boxes
- Canisters and tubs for decanted goods
- Trays

All of these items should have been cleaned and sanitised. So, do you know what the difference is?

A detergent is used for cleaning. A detergent aids in the removal of food, grease and dirt and makes the surface look clean, however it does not sanitise.*

A sanitiser only reduces the amount of bacteria on the surface to an 'acceptable level'. It does *not* clean, it does *not* sterilise, and it will only work on surfaces that have been cleaned first.

As indicated above, most people sanitise their crockery and utensils in their dishwasher. But this is not the only way to sanitise.

The four main ways of sanitising are:

- Hot water over 82°C (for at least 6 seconds)
- Heating the surface that you have cleaned with steam to over 82°C
- Immersing what you have cleaned in a chemical sanitiser (contact time depends on the chemical)
- Spraying the surface of the item with a sanitiser†

There are some businesses that put everything through their dishwasher even if it has been manually washed as the rinse cycle is the sanitising step. A dishwasher uses hot water, rather than a chemical, so make sure it's over 82°C.

A good chemical company should already be providing you with the best form of sanitiser for your business, however this particular hotel that I audited had what I would consider to be an excellent chemical company as their provider, and yet they did not pick this up.

You should go out now and check what surfaces you are sanitising and which ones need to be sanitised. Remember, you can do all of your temperature checks, have great personnel hygiene practices and cook a great meal, but if you then serve or handle the food with unsanitised equipment, then all your good work could come undone.

Until next time...

Eat well. Eat safe!

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* Some chemical companies have developed a specific chemical for manual dishwashing that is a combined detergent/sanitiser, however most detergents do not sanitise.

† If spraying the surface with a sanitiser, check to see if you need to rinse the sanitiser off after a set period of time.



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