



FlexiLearnHub

Knowledge Hub

Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Kitchen Cleaning & Disinfection in Care Catering

A Practical Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 075

Version 1.0 - First Published: August 2026



www.flexilearnhub.com

Part of the FlexiLearnHub Professional Knowledge Library

Introduction

Understanding Kitchen Cleaning & Disinfection

Effective cleaning and disinfection are essential for maintaining a **safe and hygienic food preparation environment**.

In care catering, kitchens may prepare large numbers of meals every day for people who can be particularly vulnerable to foodborne illness. Food residues, harmful microorganisms and allergens can remain on surfaces, equipment and utensils if appropriate cleaning procedures are not followed.

A clean-looking kitchen is not necessarily a hygienically safe kitchen. Effective food hygiene requires staff to understand **what needs cleaning, how it should be cleaned, which products should be used and when disinfection is required**.

What Is Cleaning?

Cleaning involves removing visible dirt, grease, food residues and other unwanted material from a surface.

Cleaning is important because dirt and food debris can:

- Contain harmful microorganisms
- Provide conditions in which microorganisms can survive
- Interfere with the effectiveness of disinfectants
- Contain food allergens
- Attract pests
- Contaminate food, equipment and utensils

Cleaning is therefore an essential first stage of effective kitchen hygiene.

What Is Disinfection?

Disinfection involves reducing harmful microorganisms on a surface to a safe level using an appropriate method or disinfectant.

A surface may need to be **cleaned before it is disinfected**, because grease, food residues and other dirt can prevent a disinfectant from working effectively.

Staff should always follow the organisation's cleaning procedures and the manufacturer's instructions for the product being used.

Cleaning and Disinfection Are Not the Same

It is important that catering staff understand the difference:

Cleaning → Removes dirt, grease and food residues

Disinfection → Reduces harmful microorganisms to a safe level

Simply wiping a contaminated surface may not adequately disinfect it.

Similarly, applying disinfectant to a dirty surface without following the correct procedure may not achieve effective disinfection.

Areas Requiring Particular Attention

Kitchen cleaning should cover more than obvious work surfaces.

Areas and equipment requiring regular attention may include:

- Food preparation surfaces
- Chopping boards
- Knives and utensils
- Sinks and taps
- Food mixers and processors
- Slicers and other preparation equipment
- Refrigerator and freezer interiors
- Refrigerator door handles
- Oven and equipment handles
- Food probe thermometers
- Storage containers
- Serving equipment
- Shelving
- Floors
- Waste areas
- Frequently touched surfaces

Equipment should be cleaned according to its manufacturer's instructions and workplace procedures.

Food-Contact Surfaces

Surfaces that come into direct contact with food require particular attention.

These can include:

- Worktops
- Chopping boards
- Knives
- Mixing bowls
- Trays
- Utensils
- Food preparation machinery
- Food storage containers

Food-contact surfaces should be maintained in good condition and cleaned and disinfected **at appropriate times and whenever contamination may have occurred.**

Clean as You Go

A **clean-as-you-go approach** helps prevent food residues, waste and contamination from accumulating during food preparation.

Staff should deal with spillages and contamination promptly rather than leaving everything until the end of a shift.

This can help:

- Reduce cross-contamination
- Prevent allergen cross-contact
- Keep work areas organised
- Reduce slip and trip hazards
- Discourage pests
- Maintain safer food preparation conditions

However, cleaning activities must themselves be managed carefully so that cleaning chemicals, dirty cloths or contaminated equipment do not create additional risks.

Cleaning After Raw Food Preparation

Areas and equipment used for raw meat, poultry or other potentially contaminated raw foods require particular attention.

Staff should follow workplace procedures for:

Removing food debris → Cleaning → Disinfection → Drying or subsequent use as specified

Hands should also be washed appropriately after handling raw food and after completing contaminated cleaning activities.

Use the Correct Product

Different cleaning products perform different functions.

Examples can include:

- Detergents
- Degreasers
- Disinfectants
- Sanitisers

Staff should use only products approved for the task and follow the manufacturer's instructions and workplace procedures.

Never assume that using more chemical than instructed will make a surface safer.

Incorrect concentration can make a product ineffective, damage surfaces or create additional hazards.

Contact Time Matters

Disinfectants may need to remain on a surface for a specified **contact time** in order to work effectively.

Wiping a product away immediately may mean that adequate disinfection has not occurred.

Staff should follow instructions concerning:

- Dilution
- Application
- Contact time
- Rinsing, where required
- Safe handling and storage

Good Practice Reminder

A surface looking clean does not necessarily mean it has been effectively disinfected. Follow the correct cleaning procedure, use the correct product and allow the required contact time.

Safe Cleaning Procedures, Equipment & Preventing Cross-Contamination

Cleaning activities should make a kitchen **safer**, not create another source of contamination. Catering staff therefore need to follow a consistent cleaning process and use equipment and chemicals correctly.

In care catering, particular attention should be given to surfaces and equipment used for **raw foods, ready-to-eat foods and foods prepared for people with allergies or other specific dietary requirements**.

Follow the Correct Cleaning Procedure

The exact procedure will depend on the surface, equipment and cleaning product being used. Staff should always follow their workplace cleaning schedule and the manufacturer's instructions.

A typical process may involve:

1. Remove Food & Debris

Remove loose food, crumbs and other visible contamination from the area.

2. Clean

Use the appropriate detergent or cleaning product to remove grease, food residues and dirt.

3. Rinse Where Required

Some cleaning processes require the surface to be rinsed before disinfection. Follow the product instructions and workplace procedure.

4. Disinfect

Apply an appropriate disinfectant using the correct concentration and method.

5. Allow the Required Contact Time

The disinfectant must remain in contact with the surface for the period specified by the manufacturer.

6. Rinse Where Required

Some products require rinsing with clean water after disinfection, particularly on food-contact surfaces. Follow the product instructions.

7. Allow to Dry Appropriately

Follow workplace procedures regarding drying and when the surface or equipment can safely be used again.

Prevent Cross-Contamination During Cleaning

Cleaning equipment itself can transfer harmful microorganisms if it is used incorrectly.

For example:

Contaminated cloth → Work surface → Equipment handle → Ready-to-eat food area

Staff should:

- Use designated cleaning equipment where required
- Change or dispose of cloths according to workplace procedures
- Keep dirty cleaning equipment away from clean areas
- Clean and maintain reusable cleaning equipment appropriately
- Avoid using the same contaminated cloth across multiple areas
- Wash hands after handling contaminated cleaning materials
- Store cleaning equipment appropriately after use

Colour-coded equipment may be used by some organisations to help separate different cleaning tasks or areas. Staff should follow the system used in their own workplace.

Cleaning Raw & Ready-to-Eat Food Areas

Raw foods can contain harmful microorganisms that must not be transferred to ready-to-eat food.

Where separate areas or equipment are provided, staff should use them correctly.

If equipment or surfaces require cleaning and disinfection between different activities, staff should follow the organisation's established procedure **before preparing ready-to-eat food**.

Particular attention may be required for:

- Chopping boards

- Knives
 - Preparation surfaces
 - Sinks
 - Utensils
 - Food preparation machinery
 - Handles and controls
 - Food storage containers
-

Food Probe Thermometers

Food probes can become a source of cross-contamination if they are not cleaned appropriately between uses.

Staff should:

- Follow the organisation's procedure for cleaning and disinfecting probes
- Clean the probe before and after use as required
- Take particular care between raw and cooked foods
- Store the probe hygienically
- Never place a contaminated probe directly into ready-to-eat food

Probe hygiene is just as important as taking the temperature itself.

Cleaning Food Preparation Equipment

Some equipment contains parts that can be difficult to clean effectively.

Examples include:

- Food processors
- Mixers
- Slicers
- Blenders
- Can openers
- Vegetable preparation equipment

Before cleaning machinery, staff should follow safe isolation and manufacturer instructions where applicable.

Removable parts should be cleaned and disinfected according to the approved procedure, with particular attention to **blades, seals, joints and other areas where food residues can accumulate.**

Preventing Allergen Cross-Contact

Cleaning also plays an important role in allergen management.

Small amounts of allergenic food remaining on:

- Utensils
- Equipment
- Work surfaces
- Containers
- Chopping boards

may contaminate food intended for someone with a food allergy.

Staff should follow the organisation's allergen procedures and ensure that required cleaning has been completed before preparing an allergen-controlled meal.

Simply wiping away visible food may not be sufficient to remove allergen contamination.

Cleaning Cloths & Disposable Materials

Cloths can spread contamination around a kitchen if they are not managed correctly.

Staff should follow workplace procedures concerning:

- Disposable cloths
- Reusable cloths
- Frequency of changing
- Appropriate laundering
- Storage between uses
- Disposal of contaminated materials

A cloth that looks relatively clean may still contain harmful microorganisms.

Waste Management

Food waste and other refuse should be managed so that it does not contaminate food preparation areas.

Good practice includes:

- Using suitable waste containers
- Emptying bins at appropriate intervals
- Keeping waste areas clean
- Preventing overflowing bins
- Washing hands after handling waste
- Keeping external waste areas appropriately maintained
- Reporting signs of pests promptly

Waste should not be allowed to accumulate unnecessarily in food preparation areas.

Clean High-Touch Areas

Some surfaces may not directly touch food but are handled repeatedly throughout the working day.

Examples include:

- Refrigerator handles
- Cupboard handles
- Taps
- Equipment controls
- Door handles
- Trolley handles
- Bin lids

These areas should be included within appropriate cleaning routines because contaminated hands can transfer microorganisms from one location to another.

Never Mix Cleaning Chemicals

Cleaning chemicals should only be used according to their instructions.

Staff should **never mix different cleaning chemicals unless the manufacturer specifically instructs that this is safe and required**. Mixing incompatible chemicals can produce dangerous reactions or fumes.

Chemicals should also be stored securely and away from food in accordance with workplace procedures.

Clean Without Contaminating Food

Where possible, exposed food should be removed or appropriately protected before cleaning begins.

Staff should prevent:

- Chemical spray reaching food
- Dirty water splashing onto food or clean equipment
- Cleaning equipment touching food-contact items unnecessarily
- Chemicals being stored alongside food
- Clean equipment being placed onto contaminated surfaces

Good Practice Reminder

Effective cleaning requires the right method, the right product, the right concentration and the right contact time.

Cleaning should always **remove contamination rather than move it from one part of the kitchen to another**.

Cleaning Schedules, Chemical Safety, Problems & Staff Responsibilities

Effective kitchen cleaning depends on more than cleaning when something looks dirty. Care catering environments should have **planned cleaning arrangements** that identify what needs to be cleaned, how it should be cleaned, how frequently cleaning is required and who is responsible.

Cleaning schedules help ensure that important tasks are completed consistently and that less obvious areas are not overlooked.

Using a Cleaning Schedule

A workplace cleaning schedule may identify:

- What needs to be cleaned
- How often it should be cleaned
- Which cleaning product should be used
- The correct cleaning method
- Required dilution or concentration
- Required contact time
- Any rinsing requirements
- Who is responsible for completing the task
- Whether completion needs to be recorded

Staff should follow the cleaning schedule rather than relying solely on whether an area **looks clean**.

Different Cleaning Frequencies

Not every area of a kitchen requires cleaning at the same frequency.

Some tasks may be required:

During Food Preparation

For example:

- Cleaning spillages promptly
- Cleaning and disinfecting contaminated preparation surfaces
- Cleaning equipment between appropriate food-preparation activities
- Changing contaminated cloths
- Keeping waste under control

After Each Use

This may apply to items such as:

- Chopping boards
- Knives and utensils
- Mixing equipment
- Food preparation machinery
- Food probes
- Certain food-contact surfaces

Daily or at the End of a Shift

This may include:

- Floors
- Sinks
- Frequently touched surfaces
- Waste areas
- Preparation areas
- Certain pieces of kitchen equipment

Periodically

Some less accessible areas may require planned deep cleaning, such as:

- Behind or beneath equipment
- Shelving
- Ventilation areas
- Refrigerator and freezer interiors
- Storage areas
- Walls and other appropriate surfaces

The actual frequency should always be determined by the **organisation's cleaning schedule and food safety procedures**.

Safe Use of Cleaning Chemicals

Cleaning chemicals can create hazards if they are used incorrectly.

Staff should:

- Use only approved products
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Use the correct dilution or concentration
- Observe the required contact time
- Wear appropriate protective equipment where required
- Keep containers correctly labelled
- Store chemicals securely away from food
- Never transfer chemicals into food or drink containers
- Follow workplace procedures for spillages
- Never mix incompatible chemicals

Staff should receive appropriate information and instruction before using hazardous cleaning substances.

COSHH & Cleaning Products

Some cleaning chemicals may be hazardous substances and therefore require controls under the **Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)** arrangements within the workplace.

Depending on the product and task, controls may include:

- COSHH assessments
- Manufacturer's safety information
- Safe storage arrangements
- Appropriate PPE
- Dilution instructions
- Procedures for accidental exposure
- Procedures for chemical spillages

Staff should know where relevant safety information is kept and what action to take if an incident occurs.

Damaged Equipment & Surfaces

Effective cleaning can become difficult when kitchen equipment or surfaces are damaged.

Problems might include:

- Cracked chopping boards
- Damaged seals
- Chipped or broken surfaces
- Rust or corrosion
- Deep scratches
- Damaged storage containers
- Equipment that cannot be properly dismantled or cleaned

Staff should report damaged equipment and surfaces according to workplace procedures.

Simply cleaning repeatedly may not adequately control the risk if a surface can no longer be cleaned effectively.

When Cleaning Has Not Been Completed Properly

Staff may sometimes identify that a scheduled cleaning task has been missed or completed inadequately.

Examples include:

- Visible food residue remaining on equipment
- Greasy surfaces
- Incorrect cleaning product being used
- Required contact time not being followed
- Dirty cleaning equipment
- Cleaning records completed when the task was not actually performed
- Equipment being returned to use before appropriate cleaning and disinfection

If a problem is identified:

Stop → Correct the problem → Report where required → Record the action where appropriate

Food should not be prepared on a surface or with equipment that cannot be considered suitably clean.

Pest Warning Signs

Poor cleaning and waste management can encourage pest activity.

Possible warning signs include:

- Droppings
- Gnaw marks
- Damaged food packaging
- Insects
- Unusual smells

- Evidence of nesting
- Food debris accumulating in inaccessible areas

Staff should report suspected pest activity immediately and follow workplace procedures.

Food that may have been contaminated by pests should not simply be cleaned and returned to use.

Cleaning Records

Where cleaning records are required, they should provide an accurate account of the work completed.

Staff should:

- Complete records at the appropriate time
- Record only tasks that have actually been completed
- Report missed or incomplete cleaning
- Record corrective action where required
- Never sign for another person's work unless workplace procedures specifically require and authorise verification

Cleaning records should reflect what actually happened — not what should have happened.

Staff Responsibilities

Everyone working within a catering environment has a role in maintaining kitchen hygiene.

Staff should:

- Follow the workplace cleaning schedule
- Use cleaning products correctly
- Observe dilution and contact-time instructions
- Prevent cross-contamination during cleaning
- Maintain cleaning equipment appropriately
- Follow allergen-cleaning procedures
- Store chemicals safely
- Manage waste correctly
- Report damaged equipment and surfaces
- Report pest activity

- Complete required records accurately
 - Take corrective action within their responsibilities
 - Ask for guidance whenever they are unsure
-

Managers & Supervisors

Those responsible for managing kitchen hygiene should ensure that appropriate cleaning arrangements are established and maintained.

This may include:

- Providing suitable cleaning products and equipment
 - Establishing cleaning schedules
 - Providing appropriate staff instruction and training
 - Monitoring cleaning standards
 - Ensuring chemical safety information is available
 - Reviewing problems and corrective actions
 - Arranging maintenance or replacement of damaged equipment where necessary
-

Maintaining a Safe Kitchen

Effective kitchen hygiene depends on a continuous cycle:

Plan → Clean → Disinfect where required → Check → Record → Correct problems

Good Practice Reminder

Never sign a cleaning record simply because a task was scheduled. Records must accurately reflect the cleaning that has actually been completed.

A consistently clean and hygienic kitchen helps protect **food, residents, staff and the wider care environment.**

Summary, Practical Cleaning Checklist & Further Information

Effective **cleaning and disinfection** are fundamental parts of food safety in care catering. Cleaning removes food residues, grease and dirt, while appropriate disinfection helps reduce harmful microorganisms to a safe level.

In a care environment, high standards of kitchen hygiene are particularly important because food may be prepared for **older people, individuals who are frail and others who may be more vulnerable to foodborne illness**.

Safe practice depends on staff using the correct products and methods, following cleaning schedules, observing required dilution and contact times, preventing cross-contamination and reporting problems promptly.

Practical Kitchen Cleaning & Disinfection Checklist

Before, during and after cleaning, consider:

- ☐ Have food and clean equipment been protected from contamination?
- ☐ Have visible food residues and debris been removed?
- ☐ Am I using the correct cleaning or disinfection product for the task?
- ☐ Have I followed the correct dilution or concentration instructions?
- ☐ Have I allowed the required contact time?
- ☐ Have I rinsed the surface where the product instructions require it?
- ☐ Have food-contact surfaces been cleaned and disinfected appropriately?
- ☐ Have raw-food preparation areas received appropriate attention?
- ☐ Are chopping boards, knives and utensils clean and suitable for use?
- ☐ Have food probes been cleaned and disinfected according to procedure?
- ☐ Have high-touch areas such as handles and controls been included?
- ☐ Are cleaning cloths and equipment being managed hygienically?
- ☐ Have allergen-cleaning procedures been followed where required?
- ☐ Are cleaning chemicals correctly labelled and safely stored away from food?
- ☐ Have waste and spillages been dealt with appropriately?

- ☐ Have damaged surfaces or equipment been reported?
- ☐ Have signs of pest activity been reported?
- ☐ Have required cleaning records been completed accurately?

Remember

Cleaning should remove contamination — not move it around the kitchen. Always use the correct method, product, concentration and contact time for the task.

Further Information

For further professional guidance, staff and organisations can refer to:

Food Standards Agency – Cleaning Effectively

Official guidance explaining effective cleaning and disinfection practices for food businesses, including food-contact surfaces and equipment.

[Food Standards Agency – Cleaning Effectively](#)

Food Standards Agency – Safer Food, Better Business

Practical food-safety management guidance covering cleaning, cross-contamination, chilling, cooking and management procedures.

[Food Standards Agency – Safer Food, Better Business](#)

Food Standards Agency – Food Hygiene

Official information and guidance covering food hygiene and safe food-handling practices.

[Food Standards Agency – Food Hygiene](#)

Health and Safety Executive – COSHH

Official guidance on controlling workplace exposure to substances that may be hazardous to health, including relevant cleaning chemicals.

[Health and Safety Executive – COSHH](#)

Continue Your Learning with FlexiLearnHub

FlexiLearnHub Knowledge Hub

Explore our growing collection of free professional resources for care, catering and hospitality professionals.

[FlexiLearnHub Knowledge Hub](#)

Professional Online Courses

Continue your professional development with FlexiLearnHub's range of online training courses.

[Explore FlexiLearnHub Courses](#)

Related Knowledge Hub Resources

- **Resource 025 – Cleaning and Disinfection**
- **Resource 032 – Preventing Cross-Contamination in Care Catering**
- **Resource 071 – Food Temperature Control in Care Catering**
- **Resource 072 – Safe Food Storage in Care Catering**
- **Resource 073 – Food Safety for Vulnerable People in Care Settings**
- **Resource 074 – Preventing Foodborne Illness in Care Catering**

Related FlexiLearnHub Courses

- **Food Safety & Hygiene Level 2**
- **HACCP Training**

Copy Right & Disclaimer



<https://flexilearnhub.com>

Copyright © 2026 FlexiLearnHub

This resource has been produced by **FlexiLearnHub** to support awareness, workplace learning and continuing professional development within the health and social care sector. It may be downloaded, printed and shared in its original, unaltered format for personal learning, workplace training and educational purposes. It must not be copied, modified, republished, sold or distributed for commercial purposes without the prior written permission of **FlexiLearnHub**.