

Food Safety and Ice Cream

What does “Food Safety” mean in the context of your Ice Cream business? This article is one of a series that will introduce you to some of the risks that ice cream makers face and what can be done to help minimize those risks. Future articles will go deeper and share tips and practices to help control each type of risk.

We all know that Ice cream brings joy to everyone who’s involved with it from the customers enjoying a cone all the way to the owner of a company shipping into grocery stores. Ice cream is fun, and it can also be safe with a bit of diligence on our parts.

There are 3 major categories of risks in the production of any food product: 1) Extraneous materials, 2) Pathogens, and 3) Allergens. Each of these can pose real risks to the health of your customers and they have regulatory and financial implications for your business.

Extraneous contamination includes any physical objects that should not be in food. This can be a pen cap, a bolt from a machine, plastic, fruit pits, or even a rock that comes in with your inclusions. Anything that could cut, choke, or harm a person in any way must be kept out. Following good GMP’s, maintaining equipment, controlling production room practices, and supplier control programs all contribute to preventing issues.

Pathogens include *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, and other microbial contaminations that can cause illness. We may not think of these as ‘common’ in frozen products, but there have been a number of recalls, illnesses, and even deaths in recent years. Most pathogens can survive freezing and some like *Listeria* will grow under refrigerated conditions. The key defenses here are pasteurization, proper storage temperatures, and keeping everything which touches the product clean and sanitized. Proper sanitation, equipment design, room design, pathogen free ingredients, and employee practices are all important topics which we address in [online classes/resources](#) and these columns.

The last risk area is preventing unlabeled allergens from reaching sensitive customers. As you are aware, many people have food allergies and sometimes their reactions can be life threatening. The “Big 9” allergens of concern are milk, peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, soy, and sesame. Control of allergen risks centers on making sure people know what is in the product (i.e. accurate labeling) and ensuring there is no unintended cross contamination from one product to another (e.g. separate utensils, complete cleaning between a product with an allergen and ones without, separation of ingredients, ...).

Stay Tuned as we continue to take a deeper dive into these topics and share some practices you can put to use right away.

Thanks

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