



NATIONAL  
**FOOD  
SAFETY**  
MONTH

**ECOLAB®**

**CRACKING THE CODE:**

# The Secrets to Building a Strong Food Safety Culture





A photograph of two people, a Black woman and a white woman, sitting on wooden stairs. Both are wearing green aprons over their casual clothing. The Black woman on the left is wearing a white collared shirt and has a short haircut. The white woman on the right is wearing a black t-shirt, glasses, and has short blonde hair. They are both smiling and looking at each other, appearing to be in a friendly conversation. The background shows more of the stairs and a railing.

IN THE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY, ONE ASPECT REMAINS CONSISTENT: **THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF FOOD SAFETY.**

Recognizing this, operations across the U.S. have placed a strong emphasis on effective food safety training. Gone are the days when mere knowledge and compliance were enough. Today, food safety training goes beyond theoretical understanding; it is about cultivating a company-wide food safety culture.

**IN THIS eBOOK, WE WILL EXPLORE:**

1. How food safety training cultivates food safety culture
2. The importance of food safety culture
3. Developing a food safety plan
4. Maintaining positive culture
5. Putting food safety to practice





## EVERY WORKPLACE HAS SOME SORT OF CULTURE ESTABLISHED.

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That culture might include open door policies, cross-training between different tasks or departments, formal communications, informal work settings, and other practices that contribute to daily work life. Think of your work culture as “how we do things around here.” Even if you are self-employed, you still maintain a type of work culture.

Food safety culture works the same way – there are actions you take that dictate to others what your food safety practices are. Having a strong food safety culture is increasingly important for your guests. But what goes into a food safety culture?

Food safety needs to account for both the “how’s” and the “why’s” of what you do.

As we embark on a journey of exploring some of these “how’s” and “why’s,” keep in mind that all the food safety practices you employ – from handwashing and illness policies to simple tasks like refilling a glass of water – should focus on the safety of your guests. No business operator can afford the potential harm of a foodborne illness outbreak.

Let’s work together to keep your food safety practices and culture strong. If the concept of a strong food safety culture is

new to you, start with identifying what you already practice relative to food safety and build on that. Use this guide to help identify new ways to develop and strengthen your own food safety culture. Finally, know that the National Restaurant Association’s Food Safety and Compliance Team is here to help with any questions, advice, or simply to listen to an idea. We look forward to connecting with you, and thank you for committing to a culture of food safety in your operation.

**PATRICK L. GUZZLE**

*Vice President of Food Science at the National Restaurant Association*

# What is Food Safety Training?



In 2023, food safety training in the U.S. has undergone significant advancements, placing a strong emphasis on education and skills development.

Recognizing the critical role of well-trained personnel in ensuring safe food practices, comprehensive training programs have been implemented across the food industry.

Training sessions are tailored to different sectors of the food industry, such as restaurants, food manufacturers, and other food retailers to address specific challenges and regulations.

Additionally, regular updates and refresher courses keep individuals up to date with the latest developments in food safety standards and regulations.

## THESE PROGRAMS COVER A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS, INCLUDING:



Proper Handling  
and Storage  
of Food



Hygiene  
Practices



Allergen  
Management



Hazard  
Analysis



Advanced e-learning platforms and interactive modules have revolutionized training methods, allowing for flexible and engaging learning experiences.





## What Is Food Safety Culture?

Put simply, food safety culture refers to the practices and beliefs of an organization about the food they handle.

While food safety training delivers knowledge and best practices, food safety culture is all about behavior, attitude, and organizational mindset.

Training is the foundation on which food safety culture is built, but strong and effective culture is achieved by developing and maintaining a set of values. Preserving food safety culture is an everyday job that requires the attention of every member of the food establishment.

**IN A CULTURE OF FOOD SAFETY, EMPLOYEES OPERATE UNDER THE SHARED UNDERSTANDING THAT THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE WELL-BEING OF THEIR CUSTOMERS.**

From top to bottom, every member of your food establishment should be empowered to practice proper food safety, regardless of who is watching.



# The Importance of Food Safety Culture

Foodborne illness and allergic episodes continue to be a leading health concern in the United States.

EACH YEAR, NEARLY...



**48**  
**MILLION**

People Fall Ill<sup>1</sup>



**128**  
**MILLION**

are Hospitalized<sup>1</sup>



**3K**  
**DIE**

from Foodborne Illness<sup>1</sup>

**32 MILLION**  
in the U.S. suffer from  
food-related hospitalizations

**200K** require emergency  
medical care due  
to allergic reactions  
from food

**With these numbers only increasing over time, a positive and effective food safety culture is more important now than ever.** Maintaining a strong food safety culture means ensuring the highest standards of food quality, which helps your establishment increase customer loyalty, boost profits, and expand your popularity.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, March 24). Fast Facts About Food Poisoning.

<sup>2</sup> Food Allergy Research & Education. (2020, June 4). Food Allergy Facts and Statistics for the U.S.





## The Importance of Food Safety Culture (Cont.)

Here are a few more key benefits of a strong food safety culture:

1 — STAY COMPLIANT  
WITH INDUSTRY  
REGULATIONS

2 — SAFEGUARD YOUR  
BUSINESS FROM  
LEGAL TROUBLE

3 — FOSTER A SENSE  
OF RESPONSIBILITY  
AMONG STAFF

4 — ENHANCE  
CUSTOMER  
SATISFACTION

5 — IMPROVE STAFF RETENTION  
WITH VALUE-ADDING TRAINING  
AND DEVELOPMENT



# Developing a Plan

A strong food safety culture doesn't happen overnight—it starts with creating a food safety training plan for your entire staff.



## Leadership

Building food safety culture begins with leadership and management. Leaders should come together to set goals for themselves and their team and create a vision of how these goals will be accomplished. Additionally, managers should complete any food safety training and certifications specific to their role to strengthen their leadership skills and refresh their knowledge on the topic.



## Discuss The Importance of Food Safety

Managers and team leaders should meet with members of their staff to emphasize the importance of proper food safety. It's crucial to also ask your staff for feedback and ideas as to how food safety can be improved in your establishment. Strong food safety culture is comprised of fulfilled employees who perform their job duties with pride and diligence.



## Train Your Staff

The most effective way to instill a robust food safety culture in your establishment is by utilizing proven training solutions for your staff. Comprehensive food safety training involves covering a wide variety of topics that are crucial to operating a successful establishment. These can include food handling, allergen, sexual harassment, unconscious bias in restaurants and more.



## Equip Your Workforce

Once your staff has been educated on proper food safety practices, it's time to equip them with the tools to perform the task most effectively. This can involve upgrading current equipment or purchasing new and exciting technology that empowers your staff to improve their food quality and safety.



# Maintaining Positive Culture

Once a food safety culture has been established, the key is to maintain a positive culture where staff feel encouraged to go above and beyond what is expected.

**There are 5 factors that effectively help sustain a strong food safety culture:**

## EQUALITY

Effective food safety culture starts from the top of the organization. If company leaders are exemplifying exceptional food safety standards, it is far more likely that other members of the organization will follow suit. Ensure every member of your establishment is holding themselves to the same food safety standards.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The backbone of effective food safety culture is accountability. A food establishment is only as strong as its weakest link, making it of vital importance to hold every member accountable to the highest food safety standards possible. This can include offering employees the opportunity to speak out on issues in the workplace, anonymously or with the leadership team.

1

2



3

### TEAMWORK

We all know that teamwork makes the dream work, and that stays very true with maintaining a positive food safety culture. Food establishments thrive in environments that revolve around teamwork and positivity. Implementing a culture of community creates an optimistic, efficient, and productive atmosphere.

4

### ENCOURAGEMENT

Positive reinforcement of proper food safety goes a long way with members of your staff. Employees want to feel like they matter and will be noticed when they are performing at their peak. This can be accomplished by actions like positive feedback or bonuses when members of your staff display consistent, exceptional food safety practices.

5

### TRAINING

When it comes to food safety, training never stops. New food safety concerns, allergies, and regulations are constantly emerging, making it crucial for your entire staff to stay educated and trained on the most recent updates. Food safety refresher courses are an excellent way to keep the latest food safety guidelines and best practices fresh in the mind of your entire food establishment.





## Putting Food Safety to Practice

By prioritizing food safety training, food service operations empower their workforce with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain the highest standards of food safety.

This responsibility cannot be taken lightly, as a lack of food safety can have a severe negative impact on the health and well-being of your customers, the trust they have in your establishment, and the success of your operation. A strong food safety culture is all about maintaining the highest food safety standards and practices possible with pride and diligence, from the top to the bottom of your organization.

ServSafe offers courses tailored to every member of a food establishment, to ensure your entire organization exemplifies robust food safety culture.



Industry-leading certification & training programs like **ServSafe** help instill the **education and best practices** **restaurants** need to create and maintain a strong & effective food safety culture.







# The ServSafe Solution

**ServSafe provides the nation's most trusted training and certification solutions to help protect businesses, employees, and customers.**

To be successful in the restaurant and hospitality industry, your establishment must display strong operations, reliable risk mitigation plans, and develop and retain high quality talent. Our complete suite of products (which includes ServSafe Manager, ServSafe Food Handler, ServSafe Alcohol and ServSafe Allergens) helps prepare foodservice employees for front-of-house and back-of-house situations and delivers the knowledge, leadership, and protection to satisfy the needs of our industry.

ServSafe provides each user with the flexibility of training online or in the classroom. ServSafe training and certification is offered in multiple languages, accepted in all 50 states, and is recognized by more federal, state, and local jurisdictions than any other food safety certification. ServSafe is backed by industry experts to ensure you receive reliable, current, and actionable information.

**VISIT [SERVSAFE.COM](https://www.servsafe.com) TO EXPLORE OUR COURSES AND BEGIN UTILIZING THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE AND FLEXIBLE FOOD SAFETY TRAINING PROGRAMS IN THE INDUSTRY.**