



Handling Fresh Produce on Salad Bars*

Preparation and Set Up

- Use equipment with food shields or sneeze guards. In elementary schools, equipment with a solid barrier between the students and the food is recommended.**
- Consider offering pre-packaged or pre-portioned items for students in all grades. In elementary schools, pre-packaged or pre-portioned items are recommended for all self-service items.**
- Place a clean and sanitized utensil in each container on the salad bar. Consider replacing utensils at the beginning of each meal period.
- Label containers to identify foods and condiments.
- Use dispensers or single-use packages for salad dressings and other condiments.
- Set up the salad bar just prior to the meal period.
- Select container size so that food is used within one meal period.
- Provide individually wrapped eating utensils, or keep unwrapped utensils in containers with the handles up.

Temperature Control

- Verify that the temperature of equipment is at 41 °F or below before use.
- Check to be sure the bottom of the pan comes into contact with the ice or ice pack, when using them for temperature control.
- Chill foods to an internal temperature of 41 °F or below before placing on the salad bar.
- Check and record internal temperatures of each food item with a clean, sanitized, and calibrated thermometer before placing it on the salad bar. Check at least every two hours to verify that it remains at or below 41 °F.

Supervision

- Consider using a serving line with a solid food shield in elementary schools, allowing students to select items for assisted service rather than self-service. Employees place selected items on a plate or tray, then pass it over the food shield to students.**
- Monitor self-service salad bar in middle and high schools to ensure that students do not:
 - ◆ Touch food with bare hands.
 - ◆ Touch food with clothing or jewelry.
 - ◆ Cough, spit, or sneeze on food.
 - ◆ Use utensils in multiple containers.
 - ◆ Place foreign objects in food.
 - ◆ Place dropped food or utensils back into containers.
 - ◆ Use the same plate or tray on subsequent trips.
- Assist students with utensils, if needed.
- Avoid adding or layering freshly prepared food on top of food already on salad bars and self-service lines. Check with your state or local health department for regulations on replenishing food.



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- Use a clean cloth or towel dipped in sanitizing solution to wipe surfaces during and between meal periods. Store sanitizing solution away from salad bar.

Clean Up

- Remove food immediately after the last meal period.
- Cover, label, date, and refrigerate food remaining at the end of service if it will be served the following day.
- Discard food that may have been contaminated, either unintentionally or intentionally.
- Use chemical sprays only after all food has been removed.

Follow the Food Code for your local or state jurisdiction. Consult your school district's food safety plan for appropriate actions when temperature standards are not met. Ask your local health department if you have any questions.

*These best practices are based on the FDA Food Code. Follow the food code for your local or state jurisdiction. Consult with your local health department if you have any questions. <https://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-protection/fda-food-code>

**Memo SP 31-2013, Salad Bars in the National School Lunch Program

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/salad-bars-national-school-lunch-program-and-school-breakfast-program>

These best practices are consistent with ICN's Standard Operating Procedures for Hot and Cold Holding Time Temperature Control for Safe Foods and Preventing Contamination at Food Bars.

<https://theicn.org/resources/181/food-safety-standard-operating-procedures/105686/hot-and-cold-holding-for-time-temperature-control-for-safe-foods.docx>

<https://theicn.org/resources/181/food-safety-standard-operating-procedures/105696/preventing-contamination-at-food-bars.docx>

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