

A Guide to the Safe Production and Service of Ice



Cyngor Sir Ceredigion County Council

Adran Gwasanaethau Amgylcheddol a Thai
Department of Environmental Services and Housing

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The importance of Ice and the Risks



Looks Harmless doesn't it? You would think that in quite literally freezing conditions ice would be sterile. Well, think again!

Research carried out by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health showed that approximately 25% of the samples of ice taken failed the tests for either total counts of bacteria or presence of coliforms (bacteria that normally live in the bowel and are transferred from people's hands after using the toilet). Other samples contained bacteria passed on from the nose and throat.

People serving ice should treat it as food, ensure that ice machines are cleaned regularly, and staff understand the need for good personal hygiene. This information leaflet details some practical tips to ensure that the ice which you serve is safe.

Ice in its various forms is widely used in the service of drinks and in the preparation of many food dishes. Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 clearly states that water is a food and therefore ice must be made from water that is wholesome and safe to drink and be treated in the same manner as other items such as meat, fish and dairy products. Ice may become contaminated with food poisoning organisms which may be passed onto consumers.

It is important therefore that at all stages careful attention is given to ensure that it is safe.

The Production of Ice

Most ice – in the form of cubes or otherwise is made by machine. The main problem with ice makers is that most people tend to fit them and forget them, taking the view that so long as they continue to produce ice they must be okay. It is important to then ensure that your ice is made in a clean environment, the following points will ensure that the ice is safe and without risk whether it be produced from an on site ice machine or not:

- Always position the machine away from any sources or contamination such as chemicals.
- Site the machine away from sources of heat including direct sunlight.

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- Select a machine that is well constructed, easy to clean and moveable to enable access to surrounding areas.
- Always service the machine in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions – at least twice a year.
- Clean and disinfect the machine in accordance with manufacturer's instructions, usually at least once every two weeks. This should include the outside, cover, handles etc.
- All utensils such as scoops and spoons used to remove the ice from the machine should be washed and disinfected daily and stored in a clean place when not in use. These should be of either stainless metal or plastic.
- Machine tops or covers should always be in place to prevent dust etc falling on the ice.
- Always keep the ice storage bin lid closed when not in use.
- Ice should never be scooped out of the machine by hand.
- Do not use a glass to remove ice, as there is an obvious danger of contamination from glass fragments.
- Never leave the scoop or tongs lying on a work surface. Provide a special holder which can be filled with a food grade sanitizing agent. Do not keep scoops in the ice machine as the handle may come into contact with the ice.
- Never store other foods in the machine (such as bottles or other foods).

The Storage and Service of Ice

- Most ice for drinking – often in the form of ice cubes – is served from an ice bucket. These should preferably be insulated with the lid kept in position to retain the temperature and prevent contamination. The buckets should be in good condition and thoroughly cleaned both inside and out daily. If water begins to accumulate at the base of the bucket then the ensure contents should be disposed of.
- Only tongs, scoops or spoons of stainless metal or plastic should be used to remove the ice and these should be kept in sound condition and cleaned thoroughly each day. If stored in the bucket, contact between the handle and the ice should be avoided.

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- If you buy ice in pre-packed bags always make sure that it is produced by and sold by reputable firms.
- Never use fingers to remove ice from the bucket
- Members of the public should NOT be given the opportunity to serve themselves with ice
- Never re-freeze ice that has begun to melt
- Avoid refilling ice buckets. It is better to completely empty a bucket and restock with fresh ice
- If ice is produced other than in a machine e.g. in a mould- then this should be of such material that there is no risk of contamination and the containers should be completely emptied and cleaned between use. Finger contact with the ice when emptying the moulds should be avoided.

Ice and food handling Staff

It is important that all staff maintain the highest standards of personal health and hygiene including the need for clean hands and all other parts of the body or clothing likely to come into contact with the ice or equipment

All staff should be adequately trained in safe food handling and ensure that they are aware of health and safety requirements such as the need to disconnect the appliance (ice machine) from the electricity supply prior to cleaning/servicing.

More food safety information can be obtained from:

Department of Environmental Services and Housing
Ceredigion County Council
Penmorfa
Aberaeron
Ceredigion
SA46 0PA

Tel: 01545 572105
Fax: 01545 572380

www.ceredigion.gov.uk
envhealth@ceredigion.gov.uk

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