

RECEIVING, GOOD ADVICE

Driving into work, you feel pretty good about the day ahead. You have reservations for a couple of large parties who have traditionally enjoyed several rare bottles of wine during their business lunches. You can see the money just rolling in and you are already planning where to spend your new found wealth. It's 8:30am.

Within the first 30 seconds of your arrival, you learn of several alarming developments. First, two of your servers (who recently started dating) have mysteriously come down with the same illness and won't be coming in to work. As you are walking to your office, pondering who to call to cover the shifts, you discover that the cooks from last night's shift had one heck of a food fight. The morning staff has been cleaning up all morning and has not yet started to prepare for the profitable meal period you envisioned only 30 minutes ago. You begin to consider how many free appetizers and desserts you will be forced to provide as your new found wealth quickly fades away.

You dawn your superhero cape ... the one you keep in your office for events such as this one ... the one you seem to wear at least three times a week. You develop a plan of action, determining that if everything works out just right ... you can make your deadline and present a meal that will conceal the morning's surprise developments.

One hour into your heroic efforts, the day's food deliveries show up. Given the state of the kitchen and your priorities, you determine that the food is probably acceptable, and that your order is probably accurate. Besides, there is no where to really check the product anyway. You direct your staff to "keep on moving." It's 10:45am.

The lunch goes off without a hitch. You receive one compliment after another, and realize that your new found wealth Has returned. The average check was pretty nice!

Proper Receiving Can Prevent Catastrophe

The next day you get a call from one of the previous day's diners. Food poisoning. You figure it could have been caused by anything ... not necessarily the food you served. That possibility is quickly corrected when you receive 16 more calls of a similar nature. Food Poisoning. Your new found wealth ... gone again.

This entire incident could have been avoided if proper receiving practices were followed. Without a receiving station, however, proper receiving is hard to accomplish.

Receiving standards are your best defense against potential foodborne illness outbreaks. The best way to prevent foodborne illness within a foodservice facility is to never allow contaminated food to enter the kitchen. Once contaminated food is in the facility, the risk of cross contamination and food poisoning increases exponentially.

A properly designed receiving station must be well thought out, and allow the receiving party to thoroughly check the product before it is accepted. In addition to food safety issues, financial issues are an important reason for a proper receiving station. Accepting sub-standard or incorrect product could have significant financial implications on actual costs and the customers' perceived value.

Components of the Receiving Station

The receiving station should be located near the receiving door or dock. The product should be checked immediately upon arrival. A receiving scale, sized to accommodate the standard weights of your typical orders, should be readily accessible. If you have ordered 22 pounds of lobster, you had better get 22 pounds of lobster. If you do not weigh the product, you may pay for 22 pounds, but accept 18 pounds of product.

A table with a sink should be provided. The table will provide a landing space so that the product may be thoroughly inspected before acceptance, and the sink will allow rinsing and further checking of product. The table should be located

near the receiving door, but does not necessarily have to be dedicated for this sole purpose. A standard prep table with sinks in the vicinity will suffice. Checking product properly can prevent contaminated food from entering your facility and reduce the risk of cross contamination.

Other essential receiving station components include a thermometer, air door, receiving desk, and waste receptacle. The thermometer is required to verify that the product you are receiving has been stored and delivered at the right temperature. The air door will help with pest and climate control. The air door should be connected to a micro-switch that will turn the fan on automatically when the door is open. Continuing with our list, the receiving desk (or ample counter space) will provide a viable location for paperwork. And finally, the waste receptacle will be used for excess packaging and waste from product.

Proper receiving practices are required to prevent foodborne illness outbreaks, ensure the financial viability of the operation, and help control product quality. Receiving is an important task, but is often overlooked. The provision of a well-designed receiving station can make the task easier, and could have prevented the food poisoning that ruined the business lunches discussed earlier.