

WSGW Radio Presentation

Behind the Bar

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When doing routine food safety evaluations of restaurants, our first thought is about the kitchen, but what about the bar?

What are some factors to consider when looking at the safety of our beverages?

A few factors we need to be aware of include:

- measures to prevent bare hand contact with ready to eat foods such as ice, lemons, limes, and other drink garnishes,
- temperature control and date marking of potentially hazardous drinks such as milk and cream, and
- the availability and use of handwashing sinks at the bar and server stations.

These are things you can observe when dining out.

What about the cleaning frequency of the beer lines for draft beer? Yeast and hops are keys to a beer's taste. You cannot stop yeast from going inside beer lines and when it grows out of control, it isn't pleasant. Yeast, while necessary in making beer, provides a nutrient for bacteria to grow. While the danger to health may not be life threatening, it can produce stomach distress.

Unfortunately, a lot of states do not require specific time frames for cleaning, or require it only in the vaguest sense as "shall be clean to the sight and touch" or "cleaned as necessary to preclude accumulation".

There are signs that beer lines are not cleaned frequently enough such as floaties in the beer. Floaties can be a result of bacteria forming colonies, growing out of control, and literally breaking off into the lines. Another way to spot it is by taste. If a beer has a buttery type taste this is the bacterium working. If the beer has a sour/vinegary flavor, it means the acetic acid from the yeast has built up.

All of these indicate the lines have not been cleaned and sanitized properly.

Sources: Michigan Restaurant Association
Michigan Environmental Health Association Journal November 2015.

www.saginawpublichealth.org