

SELECTING SUPPLIERS

Objective: *After completing this week's lesson you should be able to choose a safety-conscious food supplier*

Food safety starts long before you prepare or serve meals in your operation. To be sure the food you serve is safe, you must first control the quality and safety of food that comes in your back door. The final responsibility for the safety of food entering your establishment rests with you.

Using approved suppliers is the first step in the process. A number of factors go into selecting the right suppliers. Choosing a supplier who can deliver safe food is the ultimate goal. Before you accept any deliveries from a supplier, it is important to make sure that the food you purchase comes from approved sources. Also check suppliers to see if they meet or exceed the food safety standards you follow in your establishment.

Here are some guidelines to consider when selecting a supplier:

- **Make sure suppliers are getting their products from licensed, reputable sources.** Check with your regulatory agency to find out if your suppliers have had any food safety problems or health code violations. Ask other operators what their experiences with a particular supplier have been.
- **Inspect your supplier's warehouse or plant from time to time, if possible.** See if it is clean and well run.
- **Ask your suppliers if they have a HACCP program in place.** (If they supply fresh produce, ask whether they have a Good Agricultural Practices Plan.) If not, ask what precautions or procedures they take to ensure product safety.
- **Find out if your supplier's employees are trained in food safety.**
- **Check the condition of the supplier's delivery trucks.** Are they clean and well maintained? Do they hold refrigerated or frozen products at the proper temperatures? Are raw products separated from processed food and fresh produce?
- **Check your supplier's shipments for consistent product quality.** Inspect deliveries for unsafe packaging. Broken boxes, leaky packages, or dented cans are signs of careless handling.
- **Request that suppliers deliver products when your staff has time to receive them properly.**

Think about your past experiences with suppliers. Have they been generally good or bad? How might the less-than-satisfactory experiences have been improved if you used some of the new knowledge you gained in this lesson?

Now, turn to the activity sheet found on the next page to test your "supplier savvy"

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Supplier Interview

Directions: You are assigned to select a new supplier of seafood for your restaurant. You will soon begin interviews with three possible supplier candidates. In the space below, create a list of 5 questions you will ask each of these candidates in order to decide which supplier to select. Keep in mind the guidelines you learned in this lesson as you put together your list.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Let's Go on a Trip!

Directions: Take your managers and supervisors on a field trip to a food manufacturer or distributor you do business with and tour its facility. Remember, it is your right as a customer to ask to take a look around.

Consider these places:

- Dairy plant
- Seafood supplier
- Poultry plant
- Bakery
- Meat- packing house
- Food distribution warehouse
- Cannery

Always call ahead. Group sizes may be limited, and access to different parts of these facilities is often restricted. With the cooperation of a plant manager, these tours can be remarkably informative, but be sure you have prepared a list of questions you would like answered before you arrive.