

## **What does Food Safety Mean??**

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So, what does “Food Safety” mean in the context of your Ice Cream business?

This first article in a monthly series introduces some of the risks we face and what can be done to help minimize those risks. Future articles will go deeper and share tips and practices to help control each type of risk.

We all know that Ice cream brings joy to everyone who’s involved with it from the customers enjoying a cone all the way to the owner of a company shipping into grocery stores. Ice cream is fun, and it can also be safe with a bit of diligence on our parts.

There are 3 major categories of risks in the production of any food product:

- 1) Extraneous materials,
- 2) Pathogens, and
- 3) Allergens.

Each of these can pose real risks to the health of your customers and they have regulatory and financial implications for your business.

Extraneous contamination includes any physical objects that should not be in food. This can be a pen cap, a bolt from a machine, broken glass, or even a rock that comes in with your inclusions.

Anything that could cut, choke, or harm a person in any way must be kept out. Following good GMP’s, maintaining equipment, controlling production room practices, and supplier control programs all contribute to preventing issues.

Pathogens include Listeria, Salmonella, and other microbial contaminations that can cause illness. We may not think of these as ‘common’ in a frozen product, but there have been a number of recalls and illnesses in recent years.

Most pathogens can survive freezing and some like Listeria will grow under refrigerated conditions. The key defenses here are pasteurization, proper storage temperatures, and keeping everything, which touches product after pasteurization clean and sanitized.

Proper sanitation, equipment design, room design, added ingredients, and employee practices are all important topics we’ll address in these columns and in upcoming online classes/resources.

The last risk area is preventing unlabeled allergens from reaching sensitive customers. As you are aware, many people have food allergies and sometimes their reactions can be life threatening.

The “Big 8” allergens of concern are milk, peanuts, tree nuts, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, wheat, and soybean.

Control of allergen risks centers on making sure people know what is in the product (i.e. accurate labeling) and ensuring there is no unintended cross contamination from one product to another (e.g. separate utensils, complete cleaning between a product with an allergen and ones without, separation of ingredients, ...).

Tune in next month and we'll take a deeper dive into one of these topics and share some practices you can hopefully put to use right away.