



UNIVERSITY
HEALTH & SAFETY

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:

PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

BUFFET SERVICE GUIDELINES

Revised June, 2017

GUIDELINE NUMBER 3 - DROPLET PROTECTION IN SELF-SERVICE AREAS OF SERVICE LINES

Unpackaged food displayed in service lines for customer self-service shall be shielded so as to intercept a direct line between the customer's mouth and the food being displayed, or shall be in a container which has a tight-fitting, securely attached lid, or may be dispensed from approved mechanical dispensers.

This means that displayed food must be protected by a sneeze-guard **or, as an acceptable alternative, placed in a service container which has a tight-fitting securely attached lid.**

Acceptable containers include self-closing containers such as roll-top chafing dishes ("chafers") whose lids are set not to open to more than 90 degrees from their closed position and other containers which may meet the approval of UHS – Public Health Program.

GUIDELINE NUMBER 4 - DROPLET PROTECTION AT ATTENDED STATIONS OF SERVICE LINES

Unpackaged food may be displayed in other than Guideline 3 self-service containers if **both** of the following conditions are satisfied:

- 1) The food is served by an employee of the establishment directly to a consumer.
- 2) The food is displayed in clean, sanitary, and covered or otherwise protected containers.

This standard may be met by either:

- 1) Placement of a sneeze-guard which meets the standards of Guideline No. 2 between the food and the customer; or
- 2) The attending employee serving the food from a covered container, so long as the cover is replaced after each serving; or
- 3) Other protection which provides an equivalent barrier which intercepts a direct line between the mouth of the average consumer and the food. Containers such as roll-top or half-dome chafing dishes meet this requirement provided that when the container is open, only the attending employee directly faces the food.

Service Line Food Preparation - At cooking stations a sneeze-guard which conforms to Guideline No. 2 must be placed between the customer and food ingredients used to prepare items for other customers. However, sneeze-guards are not required between the customer and the food item being prepared specifically for that customer.

UTENSILS, FLATWARE, AND DINNERWARE

GUIDELINE NUMBER 5 - - UTENSILS AND SELF-SERVICE DISPENSING OF FOOD ITEMS IN SERVICE LINES

A Dispensing Utensils.

MN Food Code requires that food displayed in self-service containers be provided with a utensil which has a handle sufficient to dispense the food item.

Each service container must be provided with at least one appropriately sized serving utensil for use exclusively with that container. The utensil must be of sufficient size and design to prevent it falling into or out of the container when not in use. The self-service utensils must be changed, cleaned and sanitized as regularly as required by MN Food Code 4626.0845, 4626.0900.

B Dinnerware and Flatware.

All reasonable steps should be taken to keep patrons from reusing their dinnerware (plates, saucers, etc.) when returning to the service line. Sufficient clean dinnerware should be provided so that customers are not encouraged to reuse their dinnerware when returning to the service line. Signs should be posted directing patrons to obtain a clean plate when returning to the service line. Suitable facilities should also be available near the service line in which to deposit used dinnerware.

The managers/vendors/operators of a food buffet venue should also take special care to provide sufficient utensils, dinnerware and service line supervision to reasonably discourage customers from (1) reusing dinnerware, (2) using their hands or their table flatware to dispense food, or (3) otherwise unnecessarily handling or touching displayed food items.