



# Drinking ices: A guide to the hygienic production, storage, and service of ice for drinks

## Production of ice

Most food poisoning organisms do not readily multiply in foods below  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

However, scientific research has shown that certain bacteria and viruses can survive freezing for many hours and can also remain viable in very strong alcoholic drinks.

It is therefore important that ice does not become contaminated by food handlers, airborne particles or from dirty utensils. The most likely sources of ice contamination are inadequate cleaning of ice-making machines and poor hygiene practices when handling ice.

In order to reduce the risk of ice being the source of infection to customers, staff and the management in public houses and restaurants should be aware of the following points:-

### Water supply

The ice machine must be connected to a direct wholesome mains water supply.

### Machine location

The machine should be sited in an area that is free from dirt or dust, preferably off the ground and away from any source of heat.

### Machine cleaning

1. The ice storage compartment should be cleaned regularly, **at least fortnightly**, to prevent a build up of bacteria. It should be monitored for any growth of scum or slime, and if such growth becomes apparent, it should be immediately cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions.
2. The ice should always be removed and the ice storage compartment should be cleaned using taint-free sanitiser, bicarbonate of soda, or a vinegar and water solution. This should be followed by a thorough rinse.
3. The ice that has been removed from the machine to allow for cleaning, must be thrown away and not returned to the ice machine as it may be contaminated.
4. The exterior surfaces including hand contact surfaces of the machine, and the door/hatch of the ice storage compartment, must be kept clean.

## **Handling, storage and service of ice**

The persons dispensing ice from the machine should wash and dry their hands thoroughly before starting this task.

The ice should always be removed from the machine using a clean utensil such as a plastic scoop. **Hands should never be used.**

**Do not** use a glass as a scoop. It may chip or break leaving glass fragments in the machine and in the ice. These could contaminate customers' drinks and cause injury.

The use of trays to make ice is not recommended as this may involve direct handling which can lead to contamination.

Both the scoop and the container it is kept in, should be kept in a clean place. The scoop should be stored in a food grade sanitiser solution, which should be changed regularly.

The scoop should not be left in the machine. After use it should be returned to the container of sanitiser solution.

The door/hatch of the ice machine should be kept closed unless ice is being dispensed from the machine.

The ice compartment of the machine should not be used for storage of bottles of beer, drinks cans, cartons of milk or any other items as these can be sources of contamination.

If ice is stored in ice buckets, lids should always be provided. Ice buckets should be kept behind the bar, where staff alone can serve ice, otherwise customers may help themselves to ice with their hands.

Ice buckets and serving utensils must be regularly cleaned and sanitised. Ice remaining in the ice buckets at the end of the service period should be thrown away, and should not be returned to the ice machine. Buckets and scoops may be cleaned in a dishwasher.

## **Health and safety**

Before proceeding with any cleaning operation, ensure that the electrical power supply to the ice machine is switched off and that the water line is closed.

## **Legal requirements**

### ***Regulation (EC) No852/2004***

In law, ice used in drinks is a food. Ice must be made from water that is safe to drink. It must be made, handled and stored like any other open food, so that it is not contaminated.

## **Conclusion**

- Contaminated ice can be the cause of food poisoning.

- All catering staff must maintain high standards of food hygiene.
- All catering staff must maintain high standards of personal hygiene.
- All catering staff should be suitably trained.
- Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that ice served to your customers is safe and wholesome.
- Ice is food and should be treated with the same standards and care.

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