

## 【Food Safety Overview】 Hygiene Inspection and Sampling of Food



To safeguard public health and ensure food safety, the Department of Food Safety of the Municipal Affairs Bureau conducts hygiene inspection and sampling of food for testing in the circulation links of food in Macao. It regulates and monitors the safety and hygiene of food in over 6,000 food-related establishments spreading across the city, encompassing food and beverage establishments, food factories, takeaway shops and supermarkets and retail stores, hospitals, airport and schools. This introduction takes a detailed look into the routine tasks of inspection staff, presented in question-and-answer format.

**Q: What are the required qualifications of the inspection officers of the Department of Food Safety?**

A: All the monitoring personnel are required to attend pre-employment training prior to performing their inspection duties. The course content, which comprises theory and practical sessions, equips the trainees with the required knowledge, expertise, skills and work attitude for the job. They learn theories about food safety, pertinent legal knowledge, food sampling methods and skills needed for handling unforeseen incidents. In practical sessions, senior personnel lead recruits in teams to ensure their knowledge and experience are shared. While on duty, the recruits continuously gain understanding of shop operators and follow up on them in the areas where they carry out inspection to effectively perform their frontline work in food safety monitoring.

The Department of Food Safety has also prepared a prescriptive inspection form and respective internal guidelines for the inspection staff to follow when they conduct monitoring and assessment of the hygiene condition of food establishments and their food products.



Photo 1: Food safety inspection staff attend pre-employment training

Photo 2: Prescriptive inspection form

**Q: What are the factors that determine the frequency of inspection?**

A: The frequency of inspection of each food establishment is different, and depends on the establishment's level of food safety risk and previous inspection records. The Department of Food Safety may factor in recent food incidents, food-poisoning cases, food safety complaints and seasonal food products in its consideration to increase the inspection frequency of certain food establishments.



Photo 3: Reinforcing regulation of moon cake products and related establishments with the approach of Mid-Autumn Festival

**Q: Is the inspection of food establishments usually conducted during office hours? Are there any exceptions?**

A: Generally, inspection time is scheduled within the business hours of the food establishment. Moreover, cross-departmental collaboration is established to combat food safety violations and illegal practices, like taking joint action with the Macao Customs Service to prevent food products that have not undergone statutory inspections from entering the food market. According to intelligence and actual situations, joint enforcement blitz operations are organised. Raiding of suspicious food establishments and venues engaged in the collection or sale of food ingredients are conducted at **different hours** to crack down on illegal activities.



Photo 4: Cross-departmental collaboration to combat food safety violations and illegal practices

**Q: What are the main concerns in the inspection of food establishments?**

A: The Department of Food Safety staff carry out inspection in accordance with the established inspection guidelines. The inspection staff monitor and assess the hygiene condition of the food establishment and its food products by checking the overall food safety situation of the food establishment, such as the hygiene and safety conditions of the food preparation and storage areas, hygiene practices in food handling, the environment and temperature of food display, condition and cleanliness of food contact surfaces of equipment and utensils and the records relating to food that are kept. During the inspection, food and environmental samples may be collected for testing to verify whether the hygiene condition of concerned food products comply with pertinent regulations.



Photo 5: Collection of food samples for testing

**Q: What are the general procedures adopted when a food establishment is identified as in need of improvement during the inspection?**

A: When a food establishment is identified with problems that may affect food safety and hygiene, the inspection staff will give its business operator time to make improvements and schedule re-inspection. Possible problems include the unsatisfactory hygiene of the environment of food preparation area, lack of effective pest control measures and substandard conditions and inappropriate temperature of food storage and refrigeration. If minor issues are still found during the re-inspection, another re-inspection will be scheduled within the following few days. So occasionally, re-inspection takes place in just a few days' time to make sure the identified problems are corrected promptly.



Photo 6: Inspecting the condition and temperature of food storage and refrigeration

**Q: For the food trade, what should be noted, in particular, when it comes to keeping records relating to food?**

A: Keeping records relating to food is intended to encourage food producers and operators to fulfill their statutory obligations, which is also conducive to protecting their goodwill and interests. When a food incident occurs, the competent authorities can refer to these records for effective tracing of food source in a timely manner.

The food industry may refer to the “[Guidelines on Keeping Records Relating to Food](#)” issued by the Department of Food Safety. They set out clearly the required content of the records, ways and duration for record-keeping and points to note in record-keeping. Being aware that different sectors of the food trade (including food importers, distributors, retailers, catering industry and local food producers) may have already established their own record-keeping system, the guidelines come with a template of “Record-keeping Form relating to Acquisition or Supply of Food” for the trade to have an idea of what main items should be listed in the Record-keeping Form and other respective content.

The trade may have their own way of record-keeping based on specific needs, like keeping the receipts or invoices, written or electronic transaction records. They may also use the template of the Record-keeping Form provided in the Guidelines.



Photo 7: Guidelines and templates for keeping of transaction documents of food products issued by the Department of Food Safety are available for reference

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