

Steam and microfibre helps kitchen cleaning pass the hygiene test



By Murray McDonald*

The cleaning of a commercial kitchen is just as important as the meals that come out of it. As contract and in-house cleaners will be aware, a hospitality business' professional customer service and perfectly presented, tasty dishes will only get them so far. Part of the criteria for a five-star hospitality venue is its cleanliness and hygiene.

When hygiene is not a priority, this will soon have a flow-on effect to other areas of the business, such as its overall presentation and to the quality of the food through cross contamination and bouts of food poisoning.

The following are key ways to ensure you have the correct knowledge for a kitchen cleaning process:

More chemicals does not equal cleanliness

Traditionally, kitchen appliances have been cleaned via manual scrubbing and harsh oven degreasers. This method is not only messy and time consuming, but it can leave chemical smells in ovens that can last for weeks, and chemical residue that can transfer to food.

Many people assume that the more chemicals they spray onto food preparation surfaces the less likely cross contamination will occur. However, an overuse of chemicals will lead to food particles, oil and grime sticking to excess chemical residue, and subsequently being left there to build up or transferred onto other surfaces.

Although chemicals and disinfectant sprays are one of the ways to eliminate bacteria, when it comes to serving food to the public, very little chemical toxins should be used during your cleaning process. Using chemicals leave guests and patrons at risk of developing an allergic reaction as well as it spoiling the quality of food served.

Steam is one of the top ways to clean surfaces without using any chemical products, and only requires as little as one litre of water to produce. Steam heated to a high temperature melts grease, oils and fats without producing excess residue. Once emulsified, the melted grime is easily wiped away with a cloth. This process increases efficiency, eliminates the need for degreasers and prevents chemical odours, as well as reduces manual scrubbing.

Best method of oven cleaning

Ovens are one of the key appliances in a kitchen, and require correct

cleaning. However, many people think oven cleaning is a large task and therefore leave this type of cleaning allocated to a once a month job.

Although ovens are seen as one of the most heavily soiled appliances in a kitchen, if the oven isn't constantly in use then it may only be lightly soiled. There are different methods to cleaning heavily or lightly soiled oven surfaces. As above, use minimal chemicals as possible as chemicals from oven cleaning can easily be transferred to food.

The first step when cleaning ovens is to remove any racks. This will enable easy cleaning of the oven ceiling, walls and floors. If the racks are heavily soiled it is good idea to soak them in a tub of degreaser, ensuring all degreaser chemicals are washed off at the end. From here you will need to identify the state of the oven as heavy or lightly soiled to determine the best method to clean.

For heavily soiled greasy ovens it is best to use a high temperature steam. Start inside the oven from the ceiling, steaming in-between small areas to melt grease and wipe away with a stiff brush or steel wool that will not scratch the surface. Continue this process from top to bottom until the oven is cleaned.

For lightly soiled cleaning, this can be done using a microfibre cloth. A microfibre cloth does not require any chemicals, and because of its unique durable fibres, it can pick up any grime or residue on lightly soiled areas. It can be used slightly damp or dry. It is always best to start high (oven ceiling) and work down (over floor) as moisture/grime will fall.

Cleaning low to the ground

If you haven't been down on the floor recently, then you may be missing out on some vital areas of a kitchen that need a deep clean. Auditors particularly like to focus on the state of cleanliness low to the ground.

Areas such as under fridges, sinks and benches are just some of the areas that can be missed during regular cleans because they are hard to reach.

It is common for cleaning priority to go to areas that are visible to patrons. However, when visible areas are cleaned, such as mopping visible flooring areas, dirty water oozes out and soils hard-to-reach places and covings. Regularly changing the mop head and water, or using a microfibre mop head minimises the recycling and recontamination of a floor's surface.

**Murray McDonald has more than 20 year's experience in the distribution of cleaning machine products and is director of Duplex Cleaning Machines, www.duplexcleaning.com.au*