

Hygiene Guidelines on Preparation and Serving of Ice Creams

Objective:

Ice creams should be stored at a low temperature after being prepared. Improper practices in the subsequent storage or handling process, such as mixing contaminated ingredients inadvertently when serving ice creams, may increase the possibility of food safety hazards of the final products. These Guidelines aim to remind the trade to pay attention to food hygiene and safety matters when preparing and serving ice creams.

Scope:

Establishments that prepare and serve ice creams, including ice cream stores and dessert stores offering takeaways and dine-in services.

Definition:

Ice cream: The frozen dairy product obtained after mixing milk, cream, non-fat milk solids, sugar, emulsifiers and stabilisers, pasteurisation and freezing. In addition, fruits, chocolate, candy and syrup can also be added to the ice cream to enhance its flavour.

Content:

1. Smart Purchase and Receipt

1) Purchase

- Purchase food ingredients in the amount as needed;
- Purchase ingredients from reputable suppliers and prioritise ingredients that have been pasteurised. Do not buy ingredients that have not been inspected, quarantined or are of unknown origin (such as milk, cream and eggs);

- Retain purchase and sales records or other relevant receipts for source tracing by competent government authorities whenever necessary.

2) Receipt

- Check whether the food ingredients are stored at proper temperatures and make sure they are in good condition with intact packaging and have not expired. Furthermore, check the information on the invoices to see if it is consistent with the received goods;
- Reject food ingredients which are from unknown sources, perished or expired;
- Once received, food ingredients requiring low temperature storage (e.g. ice cream mix, hard ice cream, etc.) should be stored in a refrigerator (with chill temperature below 5°C and freezing temperature at -18°C or below);
- Food ingredients that need to be kept under room temperature should be stored in a cool, well-ventilated place to avoid exposure to direct sunlight;
- Ready-to-eat food and non ready-to-eat food products should be stored separately in lidded containers, preferably in two refrigerators,
- Single-use containers and other utensils should be stored in lidded containers or sealed plastic bags to avoid external contamination;
- If necessary, request the suppliers to provide relevant documents about the food products, such as health certificate, certificate of origin and laboratory report, etc.

2. Careful Preparation

1) Preparation

- Avoid over-production or preparation of food too far in advance;

- Wash all ingredients thoroughly; wash fruit ingredients thoroughly with drinking water before use¹ and peeling (if applicable);
- Use more than one set of utensils to handle ready-to-eat and non ready-to-eat food products separately;
- Follow the “First-in, first-out” principle to use food ingredients with earlier expiry date first;
- It is recommended to choose an ice cream maker with the pasteurisation² function and follow the instructions of the manufacturer or supplier on the use of the equipment. The ice cream mixture should be effectively pasteurised in the ice cream maker before the freezing process starts. The temperature and time of pasteurisation should be monitored and recorded;
- If the final product is not heat-treated or the ingredients are added after pasteurisation, heat-treated (e.g. pasteurised) ingredients and topping (e.g. ice cream mix, ice cream powder, liquid eggs and juices), along with drinking water, should be used to prepare the ice cream mixture;
- Ensure the quality and stability of the ice cream:
 - To produce soft ice cream, the air cells in ice cream mix should be small and evenly distributed in order to maintain a stable frozen foam;
 - To produce hard ice cream, the semi solid ice cream should be packed (e.g. into cartons or drums), and hardening (at about -34°C) should be performed quickly to prevent the formation of large ice crystal which may affect the quality of hard ice

¹ Reference: “Hygiene Guidelines on Time and Temperature Control”

² Pasteurisation is a mild form of thermal disinfection usually carried out at temperatures below 100°C. Various combinations of temperature and time can be used for pasteurisation to kill or inactivate pathogenic bacteria that may be present in milk, including *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella*.

cream;

- Soft ice cream and hard ice cream products should be stored at low temperature (soft ice cream at -5°C and hard ice cream at -18°C or below);
- The preparation time for dine-in and takeaway dessert with ice cream should be shortened as much as possible. Ice cream should be added in before serving and consumed as soon as possible;
- Check the temperature of refrigerator and ice cream vending machine regularly to ensure food is stored at proper temperature;
- If there are any abnormalities in the ingredients, such as deterioration or mould, it is necessary to stop using them and discard them immediately.

3. Proper Display and Sale

1) Display

- Ice creams should be stored in a well-maintained and hygienic freezing equipment for future sale;
- Use cleaned, disinfected and durable containers and utensils (e.g. made of stainless steel or opaque plastic material) to store home-made ice cream;
- Newly opened or freshly prepared ice cream should not be mixed with the leftover ice cream;
- Ice cream products for selling should not be stored with other food items (such as raw food), to avoid cross-contamination.

2) Sale

- Ice cream should be stored in clean and hygienic packaging materials or containers, and customers should be provided with clean utensils (e.g. ice cream spoon);

- If tasting service is provided, clean single-use utensils may be used to serve a small amount of ice cream for tasting by customers;
- Do not re-use single-use utensil;
- Clean, disinfect or replace ice cream scoops regularly;
- Ice creams that have melted or show signs of melting should not be refrozen for sale;
- Stop serving ice cream immediately if it has deteriorated or is suspected of being contaminated.

4. Personal Hygiene

- Wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet, before handling and selling food;
- Wear gloves and use cleaned and disinfected utensils when handling food ingredients;
- Do not handle money while handling food;
- Wear clean and light-coloured outer clothing, protective overalls or apron;
- Do not wear rings, bracelets and watches, etc., and do not wear nail polish or false nails;
- Use waterproof dressings to cover open wounds properly;
- Suspend from engaging in any food handling work when suffering from symptoms of illness such as running nose, diarrhoea, vomiting and fever, etc.

5. Utensils, Equipment and Environmental Hygiene

- All utensils and equipment that come in contact with food should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly before and after use;
- All work surfaces should be impervious. All utensils should be easy to clean and kept away from the ground;

- Replace damaged, cracked utensils;
- Use covered rubbish bins, and empty and disinfect them regularly;
- Remove and discard the leftover ice cream from vending machines regularly;
- Refrigerator should be defrosted regularly;
- Arrange regular inspection, maintenance and repair of vending machine with the supplier;
- Do not keep pets at food premises.