

# MEHKO 101 AND FOOD SAFETY

Preparing for and Passing Your MEHKO Inspection



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES**

# MEHKO Training Overview

- **Section 1: Pre-Inspection**
  - Permit Application
  - Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  - Inspection Protocols
- **Section 2: Food Safety Basics**
  - Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHFs)
  - Critical Risk Factors
- **Section 3: Violations**
  - Time and Temperature Relationship
  - Protection from Contamination
  - Food from Approved Sources
  - Additional Critical Risk Factors
- **Questions**



# SECTION 1: Pre-Inspection

- Permit Application
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Inspection Protocols



# What's Next After Submitting Permit Application Documents?

- EHS will schedule an **in-home inspection** with you.
- 2 district inspectors will visit your home.
- Focus will be on **critical risk factors** that pose a threat to human health and must be corrected immediately.
- Will ensure SOPs are completed appropriately per state code.



# Inspection Protocols

- **Your inspector will review all paperwork with you during your inspection:**
  - ✓ Permit Application
  - ✓ Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  - ✓ Rental Notification Form
- **Please ensure the following items are done prior to inspection:**
  - ✓ Inform inspector if you, or any household members have been sick within 2 weeks prior to your inspection date.
  - ✓ Wear a face covering throughout the inspection.



# Inspection Protocols

- **Please complete the following prior to inspection:**
  - ✓ Secure all pets.
  - ✓ Inform inspector of any house rules (e.g. shoe removal), gate codes (if living in gated community), or any other pertinent items within home (e.g. construction/remodel) that may affect inspection.
  - ✓ If you will be late more than 15 minutes or can no longer attend your inspection, please inform your inspector ASAP to reschedule.



# SECTION 2:

## Food Safety Basics

- Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHFs)
- Critical Risk Factors





# What Are Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHFs)?

- Food that requires time or temperature control to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation.
- Critical that you handle these foods right to prevent customers from getting sick.





# Center for Disease Control (CDC)

## Risk Factors:

- Improper cooking temperatures.
- Contaminated utensils and equipment.
- Poor personal health and hygiene.
- Food from unsafe sources.
- Improper hot/cold holding temperatures of **potentially hazardous food**.



# Major Violations You Must Be In Compliance With:

- Major violations are based off CDC risk factors.
- If any of these violations aren't corrected – you will not pass inspection.
- **NOTE:** MEHKO's are exempt from several provisions of the California Retail Food Code.



# SECTION 3:

## Violations

- Time and Temperature Relationship
- Protection from Contamination
- Food from Approved Sources
- Additional Critical Risk Factors



# Violation #1: Food Safety Certification and Food Handler Card

- You must successfully pass an approved and accredited food safety certification examination and receive a **Food Safety Manager Certificate**.
- Anyone else working in the kitchen must get a **Food Handler Card**.



# Violation #2: Communicable Disease, Reporting, Restrictions and Exclusions

Spouses, family members, or friends are **not** excluded from being in the kitchen while operating a MEHKO, but you must take precautions.



# Violation #2: Communicable Disease, Reporting, Restrictions and Exclusions

- Avoid any potential contamination to food.
- Regularly clean and sanitize equipment, utensils, and unwrapped single-service and single-use items (e.g. appliances, spoons, forks, knives, napkins).
- Anyone in the kitchen must be free of any sickness, stomach illness, or disease that is transmitted through food.





# Violation #3: No Discharge From Eyes, Nose, and Mouth

If you or anyone is experiencing sneezing, coughing, or a runny nose they cannot be in the kitchen, around exposed food, or clean equipment or utensils.





# Violation #4: Proper Eating, Tasting, Drinking, or Tobacco Use

- Food, drinks, and tobacco can be consumed in areas when MEHKO operations are active.
- Remember, you must do the following:
  - ✓ Avoid potential contamination to the food.
  - ✓ Regularly clean and sanitize equipment (e.g., utensils, unwrapped single-use utensils and napkins).



# Violation #5: Clean & Properly Washed Hands &...

- **Do not reuse** a rag or towel attached to the hip for drying – use single-use paper towels.
- **When you should wash your hands:**
  - ✓ Before starting work
  - ✓ Handling food/equipment/utensils
  - ✓ Putting on gloves



# Violation #5: Clean & Properly Washed Hands &...

- **When you should wash your hands:**
  - ✓ During food preparation to remove soil and contamination
  - ✓ When switching tasks
  - ✓ After using the restroom
  - ✓ Touching body parts



# Violation #5: Gloves

Gloves must be worn if you or anyone working with food has cuts, wounds, rashes, embellished rings, uncleanable devices, or fingernails that are artificial, polished, or are not clean, smooth, or neatly trimmed.



# Violation #5: Gloves

- Change gloves as often as handwashing is required and use only for a single task.
- Throw away gloves when damaged, soiled, or when interruption in food handling occurs.
- Minimize bare hand contact.





# Violation #6 Handwashing Facilities; Supplied and Accessible

- You must provide a handwashing sink with warm water, soap, and paper towels.
- You and your employees may pass through the kitchen (food prep areas) to get to the toilet.
- You are only required to have at least one toilet accessible for your MEHKO operation.





# REMEMBER:

- Food is prepared, cooked and served on the same day.
- You cannot reuse food from the previous day.



# Violation #7: Proper Hot and Cold Food Holding Temperatures

- **Cold holding** – Potentially hazardous foods (PHFs) that require cold holding must be held at **41°F** or below.
- **Hot holding** – PHFs that require hot holding must be held at **135°F** or higher.



# Violation #8: Time as Public Health Control, Procedures, and Records

## Time as public health control (TPHC):

- If you are choosing to use time instead of temperature as a control, food may only be kept out of holding temperatures for **4 hours** before mandatory discarding.
- Document when **4 hours** starts (sticker, whiteboard) to ensure food is discarded after **4 hours**.
- Food cannot be refrigerated or reheated after **4 hours**.
- Maintain recordkeeping on file.



# Violation #9: Proper Cooling Methods

- Food will cool more efficiently if distributed among smaller pots and pans.
- Use proper cooling tools such as ice baths and cooling paddles.



# Violation #10: Proper Cooking Time and Temperature

- Each food you cook may have a specific cooking time and temperature to eliminate bacteria growth.
- Ensure all foods are cooked to appropriate temperature for a **minimum of 15 seconds**.



# Violation #11: Proper Reheating Procedures for Hot Holding

- Food must achieve **165°F** for a minimum of 15 seconds.
- Food must be reheated to **165°F** within 2 hours.
- Reheat in smaller batches to ensure internal temperature of **165°F** is reached.
- **REMEMBER:** You can only reheat for same day usage. You cannot reheat food from the previous day to serve to customers.





# Violation #12: Returned and Reserving Food

- Customers may dine onsite as part of a MEHKO operation.
- Food that is already sent out to a customer cannot be returned and reserved to another customer. You must discard the food.



# Violation #13: Food in Good Condition, Safe, and Unadulterated

- Be aware of all potential areas in your kitchen that can contaminate your food.
- If you choose to have other members of your household in the kitchen, you must maintain a contamination free area.





# Violation #14: What are Food Contact Surfaces?

- Make sure these items are smooth, easily cleanable, and are in good repair.
- Hard maple, or an equivalent of wood, can be used as a food contact surface.



# Ware Washing

- Utensils and equipment must be properly sanitized.
- Bleach may be used as sanitizer – ensure the concentration is **100 ppm**.
- Sinks must have cold and hot water available.
- If you use your dish machine, it must meet manufacturer operating specifications.
- Air-dry equipment and utensils, do not use a rag to dry



# Approved Chemical Sanitizers

- Use single-use wiping cloths to sanitize surfaces.
- Keep sanitizing cloths in a sanitizer bucket between uses.





# Violation #15: Food from Unsafe Sources

- The food you serve must come from an approved source.
- Purchase ingredients from permitted facilities only.



# Violation #16: Hot and Cold Water Availability

- Hot water at **120°F** must be available at all times.
- Minimum temperature must be **120°F**.



# Violation #17: Sewage and Wastewater Properly Disposed

- Ensure the plumbing system in your bathroom and kitchen areas work.
- A sewage backup will result in immediate closure.



# Violation #18: Vermin, Insects, Birds, or Animals

- Keep your house and food free of vermin such as rats, mice, cockroaches, and flies.
- Any infestation will result in an immediate closure.





# Disposable Food Service Ware Ordinance

- Enforcement begins on March 25, 2022.
- The Ordinance will impact food facilities that operate within unincorporated San Mateo County and select cities.
- For more information on the requirements, visit [smchealth.org/food](https://smchealth.org/food).



# Reminders

## **MEHKOs are NOT allowed to:**

- Serve or sell raw oysters.
- Produce or sell raw milk.
- Conduct processes that require a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) Plan.
- Manufacture ice cream or dairy products.
- Serve alcohol or food that contains alcohol without a license from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Program.
- Resell food to other food facilities.
- Display signage or other outdoor advertising.
- Employ more than one full-time employee.



# Complaints

- **Code Enforcement or local police/sheriff will be contacted if there are nuisance complaints about:**
  - ✓ Noise
  - ✓ Garbage accumulation
  - ✓ Odors
  - ✓ Traffic
  - ✓ Vermin outside residence
  - ✓ Illegal, unpermitted operations
  - ✓ Sewage at public egresses



# MEHKO Resources

- [smchealth.org/microkitchen](https://smchealth.org/microkitchen)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Permit Application](#)
- [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\) Form](#)
- [Rental Notification Form](#)
- [Intermediary List](#)
- [Approved Food Safety Certification Courses](#)
  - ✓ Food Safety Manager Certificate
  - ✓ Food Handler Card



# QUESTIONS?



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH  
**ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES**

# CONTACT US



SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH  
**ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH SERVICES**

**2000 Alameda de las Pulgas**  
Suite 100  
San Mateo, CA 94403

650-372-6200 T

mehko@smcgov.org

[smchealth.org/microkitchen](https://smchealth.org/microkitchen)

