AMY'S FOOD SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

October 2026

UPCOMING SERVSAFE® CLASSES

October 13th – Louisville
October 26th – Louisville
November 10th – Louisville
November 17th – Louisville
December 1st – Louisville
December 15th - Louisville

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Taste of Louisville – Wednesday October 14th Mellwood Arts Center. Purchase tickets at www.kyra.org under the events tab!

Fall Restaurant Forum – Monday November 9th Jeptha Creed Distillery. Register at www.kyra.org under the events tab!

AMY'S FOOD SAFETY SCOOP

Food Defense

We talk a lot about methods of avoiding accidental contamination of food, but what about deliberate contamination or tampering? I am sure most restaurant operators would say "that will never happen in my restaurant". Well, maybe not but there still needs to be a plan to protect your food from deliberate contamination or tampering. And what about the places where the food is manufactured or grown. These areas could be targeted for deliberate contamination or tampering as well. I was recently at a Food Safety Task Force meeting and there were a few gentlemen from the FBI that gave a presentation on their counterintelligence group that focuses on threats to our food and agriculture industry. So, the restaurant industry needs to understand their part in Food Defense.

According to the FDA, threats can come from a variety of sources:

- Disgruntled current or former staff
- Competitors
- Terrorists or activists
- Vendors

We need to make sure we know where our food is most vulnerable. Such as unattended deliveries, unlocked storage rooms, open preparation areas, self-service stations, takeout shelves, and food left without supervision. Tampering may involve adding an unknown substance, altering packaging, switching labels, or interfering with a finished dish. Unexpected odors, colors, textures, damaged seals, unexplained spills, or misplaced products should never be ignored.

How do we build prevention in our daily operations? Consider these examples:

- **Control access** – restrict kitchens, storage rooms, chemical closets, employee-only area, and exterior service doors to

authorized staff. Keep keys, access cards, and door codes secure.

- **Inspect deliveries** – accept products only from approved suppliers. Confirm the order, examine packaging and seals, check temperatures where required, and reject items that are damaged, leaking, open, mislabeled, or otherwise suspicious.
- **Secure ingredients** – keep food and food-contact items in clean, labeled containers. Separate cleaning chemicals and other nonfood substances and lock them away when appropriate.
- **Maintain supervision** – avoid leaving exposed food unattended. Position staff to watch preparation lines, buffets, condiment stations, pickup shelves, and other public-facing areas.
- **Use inventory controls** – rotate stock, document receiving, and investigate missing products, unexplained substitutions, broken seals, or unusual inventory changes.
- **Protect takeout orders** – verify the guest or delivery driver, use tamper-evident packaging, and place completed orders in a monitored location.

Keep a written Food Defense Plan and train employees on that plan. To help, the FDA has a tool called Employees FIRST that can be used to raise employee awareness of food defense. The acronym "FIRST" is used to inform employees about the risk of intentional contamination or tampering.

F: Follow company food defense plan and procedures

I: Inspect your work area and surrounding areas

R: Recognize anything out of the ordinary

S: Secure all ingredients, supplies, and finished products

T: Tell management if you notice anything unusual or suspicious

Preventing food tampering requires consistent routines, controlled access, attentive employees, secure handling, and a clear response plan.

Food Safety First!

The Kentucky Restaurant Association is here to help with your ongoing food safety training. To register for a ServSafe® Manager class and become a CFPM please reach out to Amy West, amy@kyra.org or register on our website www.kyra.org.

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