

Dining Out – The Importance of Staff Training and Food Safety



Over the years, I have written many articles and the time has come to invite some of my friends and associates who have so much more to add. I recognize that their knowledge can only enhance your reading pleasure. To begin this collaborative process, I have asked one of my longtime friends to share the writing process with me.

Charles D. Dorn, CCM is a fellow foodie; one of first club managers who I met while attending a CMAA Regional education program – a tableware session in San Antonio in 1986! We have a shared passion for food, ranging from BBQ to Sushi; Oyster bars to white tablecloth experiences; and we might even admit to partaking of craft beers, French and California wines and the occasional single barrel Bourbon.

Through our various experiences, we have seen some great things, observed a few gaffes, as well as heard some fantastic stories. This brief article will allow us to share a few food safety observations, managerial insights and address some of the issues which scare us or make us wonder who is (or is not) running the show. These are real scenarios we have recently seen.



Poorly trained kitchen staff – The cook was wearing food safety gloves. First, he removed a chicken breast from the refrigerated drawer and from its portioned bag, pinched the seasoning mix and dusted each side, placed it on the grill and finally discarded the chicken portion bag. A salmon fillet was next, utilizing the same process as above with the addition of touching the touch screen computer monitor. Out of the refrigerated drawer came a burger. This time in addition to seasoning, the cook put a thumb print in the middle of the burger. After discarding the burger paper, he grabbed a burger roll, rolled each half on a butter/seasoning unit and placed it on a flat top grill. Finally he set up his garnishes (lettuce/tomato) for the burger.

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Alan – I observed him handle chicken, fish, burgers, rolls, lettuce, tomatoes, push the waste wrappers from all the above into the small hole in the counter and open all the various refrigerated drawer handles before finally changing gloves. He did change gloves numerous times after, and I might have sat down just as a mini-slam hit the kitchen, yet his gaffes weren't the only food safety concerns. The grill man was quite adept using his spatula to flip the chicken, salmon and burgers on the grill. From my vantage point, I could not determine if it was the same spatula used for those items, yet did note at one point he flipped a piece of chicken from the cooked side to the raw and back to the cooked side before placing back on the grill.

Charles – So how did this happen? Is the kitchen staff trained in food safety? Utilizing gloves to handle poultry, fish and meat is a necessity, but basic training would have taught the cook to change gloves to prevent cross-contamination. Proper supervision of the staff would have caught any if not all of the safety issues mentioned above. Even after the food was served, the seasoning used for the poultry and fish, all the garnishes and the butter were cross contaminated.



The Bad Bartender – Recently, we were out to dinner in NYC. The bartender was about to present our drinks when he noticed something floating in one of the drinks. Utilizing his finger, he reached into the drink, fished out the debris and presented the drink. When we questioned him, he took offense and told us it “was no big deal” and “everyone in NYC did it.” Needless to say, his manager did think it was a big deal although the bartender did not speak to us or offer us any service after.

Charles – Where to begin on this incident? From a managerial perspective, this is a major customer and safety issue and I would have suspended the bartender on the spot. From the unsanitary situation he created, to his poor attitude, this employee gives the restaurant and industry a bad name.

Alan – Definitely a case of customer disservice. I was pleased that Charles called the bartender on his bad habit, yet readily admit that I might have walked out and dined elsewhere.



Best Practices and Kudos – A Google search for “Norovirus, Private Clubs” revealed results of more than 65,000 references. A quick evaluation of a number of the cases indicated a lack of staff awareness of symptoms, poor training on how to handle these situations and most interestingly, an aversion to dealing with the media and local health departments. On the other hand, a number of our colleagues and clients are to be commended for reversing the trend. Recent conversations reveal managers have begun to work with staff, local health departments and media consultants to put plans in place to deal with a norovirus outbreak.

We realize that this brief article touches on numerous topics and that we could have delved further into the topics.

There is no magic wand that can be waved to ensure great dining experiences. Management has to be on the floor, the staff continually trained and the process started anew every day. We do hope that we have stimulated your thought processes, offered insights and that you will enhance your staff’s training and members’ dining experiences.



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Charles D. Dorn, CCM is the Managing Director of The Dorn Group, Ltd. Created in 2005, The Dorn Group, Ltd. is a full-service hospitality consulting firm focused on providing strategic planning, operations management, and executive search to the hotel, restaurant and private club industries. The Dorn Group strives to deliver proven strategies to clients by capitalizing on their potential in an ever changing world. The firm is client driven, solution based, and committed to providing the best advice and services in a timely and cost efficient manner. Dorn may be reached by telephone at (914) 921-3150 or via e-mail at charles@thedorngroup.com.