

Sampling for in-house control at catering establishments

Restaurants, cafés, large kitchens, etc. that handle perishable foodstuffs are required to carry out sampling as part of their in-house control. These instructions are a condensed version of the Finnish Food Authority's sampling instructions (only available in Finnish and Swedish).

Surface cleanliness sampling

You can carry out surface cleanliness sampling yourself, for example with Hygicult TPC tests, or you can contract out the sampling to a designated food laboratory. The sampling must cover all surfaces that come into direct contact with foodstuffs. Such surfaces include **cutting boards, worktops, tools and equipment (such as a vegetable slicer)**. The samples are to be taken from clean and dry surfaces, e.g. in the morning before starting work in the kitchen. The table below shows the numbers of surface cleanliness samples that need to be taken.

Table 1: Numbers of surface cleanliness samples

Number of portions prepared	Number of samples	Sampling frequency
fewer than 50 portions	0	no compulsory sampling
50–500 portions per day	5 samples at a time	2–4 times a year
500–2,000 portions per day	5 samples at a time	6–8 times a year
more than 2,000 portions per day	5–10 samples at a time	10–12 times a year

Surface cleanliness sampling is not mandatory if the establishment only:

- serves pre-chopped vegetables or heats up ready-made food
- handles already cooked foodstuffs (e.g. grilled sausages) or cooks prepared, raw, frozen minced meat patties or similar products
- sells loose ice cream or baked goods
- makes sandwiches with pre-cut ingredients in connection with other activities.

Listeria samples (surface and foodstuff samples)

If the establishment prepares products that have a **shelf life of 5 days (1+4) or more** and in which Listeria can grow, the establishment also needs to take Listeria surface samples and foodstuff samples. Such products include fresh salads, sandwiches, dry-cured fish and cold-smoked fish.

Ice samples

If the establishment has an ice cube maker, the quality of the ice must be tested once a year, either by sampling the ice or, alternatively, by taking surface cleanliness samples from the ice cube maker. For more information, please see the Finnish Food Authority's [instructions \(only available in Finnish and Swedish\)](#).

Monitoring results

The results of tested samples must be recorded. Any corrective measures taken in response to poor test results and the results of repeat samples must also be recorded. If results deteriorate in the long term, more effective corrective measures must be taken. The trend in results is easy to see using the so-called traffic light model, where good results are marked in green, passable results are marked in yellow and poor results are marked in red.

Food poisoning samples

Catering establishments are encouraged to take samples of any foods that they prepare and store them frozen for 2–4 weeks to help with potential food poisoning investigations. A minimum sample size of 200 grams is recommended. Combining different foods into one sample is not recommended.

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