

## FYI BE YOUR OWN RESTAURANT INSPECTOR

No matter where you travel, from Augusta, Maine, to Zhengzhou, China, you can protect yourself from food-borne illnesses. In addition to watching what you eat and drink, be your own restaurant inspector. There are many points in the foodservice process where sanitation and health standards may be compromised. Practice these simple rules:

- Follow your nose's cues. If there are funny smells emanating from the restaurant, stay away.
- Look for cleanliness. Check out the back door and trash areas. If they are neat and clean, then the restaurant probably is clean also.
- Before you are seated, check out the restrooms. This is a good indication of the importance placed on sanitation.
- Notice your servers. Have they taken care with their appearance? Do they appear to be clean? How do they handle plates and service ware? If the servers are dirty or careless, it's time to move on.
- Check for general cleanliness. This doesn't mean just the tables, chairs, floor, and uniforms; check also for dead bugs and soiled menus.

Don't run the risk of spoiling your travel fun. When in doubt, leave; there is always a good place to eat if you look!

*Sources:* Based on Dine Out Safely. *USA Weekend*, November 2–4, 2001; Satow, Y. E., Inciardi, J. F., and Wallace, S. P. (2009). Factors used by restaurant customers to predict sanitation levels. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 12(2), 170–179.

more than simply ordering and receiving F&B products. The greater the food knowledge and skills of the purchasing agent, the more effective the purchasing processes will be. For example, the purchaser must understand the impact that the menu, preparation methods, ingredients, shelf life, storage facilities, equipment, skill level of the staff, and guest expectations have on production and service delivery. Without this knowledge, problems are sure to occur. In addition, no matter how good the purchasing processes are, they can be made totally ineffective by poor receiving and storage procedures. Simple mistakes such as failing to verify amounts and weights or not checking product specifications against the **purchase order**, as well as using newer items before older items, can have an adverse impact on profitability and quality.

As in many competitive industries, foodservice operators are finding it beneficial to create partnership relationships with their suppliers. These suppliers are called **purveyors** in the foodservice industry and the relationships they are creating are called **prime vendor agreements**. In a prime vendor agreement, foodservice operators agree to direct a large portion (typically up to 80%) of their orders to a specific purveyor. In return, the purveyor agrees to categorize purchases into broad groupings, such as meats, poultry, shellfish, and canned goods, and then negotiate prices for items in each category based on a set percentage markup above cost. Other incentives such as providing training or lending specialized equipment may also be offered by the purveyor to obtain additional business.

## An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth a Pound of Cure

Foodservice operators also invest a great deal of time and money in training and technology for reasons other than improving service and profitability. In the same way an airline captain is charged with the safety of crew and passengers, so, too, are foodservice managers with their employees and guests. They must ensure that safe and proper sanitation practices and procedures are always given priority in daily operations. As you consider the following information, think about the potential dangers that could be created if sanitation were not maintained as a high priority.

Food-borne illnesses concern both consumers and suppliers. When asked what factors influenced their confidence in food safety, consumers resoundingly said cleanliness of plates and silverware, tables and tablecloths, and restrooms (81%, 77%, and