

Approved Source Policy

So, maybe you've been running restaurants for twenty years. Or maybe you just graduated from a prestigious culinary school. You know what you're doing. So why did you still get an approved food source violation?

Maybe it's time to create an approved food source policy, so you can ensure that your employees know how to effectively protect food from contamination and what to do if something isn't right.

First of all, what is a policy and how do you create an approved food source policy for your food establishment?

A policy is a defined set of actions that minimize food safety risks. Although some small food establishments may have verbal policies, it is best to write your policies down.

Here are the key steps to consider when developing any policy:

- **Include the key people at the table**
- **Identify the most important steps in your processes**
- **Ensure that your policy includes corrective actions**
- **Revise the policy based on problems that arise, or as your food processes change**

Let's look at each of these steps more closely.

When writing your policy, make sure you are including the key people in your establishment, and also consider which staff members may be involved in each step.

Here are common operations in a kitchen. Where could an approved food source issue arise in each of these steps?



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Receiving

Review how food orders are received in your establishment. Are you purchasing food from a reputable supplier? Have you ensured your suppliers are appropriately licensed? Do animal products have applicable certification stamps? Is your food properly labeled and invoiced? Are time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food items at the correct temperature when received?

Storage

Are you monitoring food storage areas to ensure staff are not bringing food from an unknown source?

Ask these questions for each of these operations:

Who is responsible?

Who purchases, picks up and receives food? Who oversees these processes? Who is responsible for execution?

What needs to happen?

The source and condition of food should be verified by the food establishment to ensure they are receiving food that is safe.

When does it take place?

These actions should be followed whenever food is purchased, picked up or received.

Where does it occur?

Any supplier website/warehouse should be assessed and the food source and condition verified.

How is this achieved?

Staff purchasing food should identify reputable food suppliers and ensure they have all applicable licenses. Staff that pick up or receive food orders shall ensure that the food is in good condition, has all applicable certifications, matches what was invoiced, and when applicable, was at the correct temperature.

As you review these key operational steps, consider whether it would make sense in your business model to write several policies for approved food source. For example, you might write separate policies for purchasing food and receiving food.



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Now for the corrective actions. This is the “what if...” step. What if something goes wrong? Your policy should state what actions are taken if the correct procedures are not followed. You can include a space for writing in corrective actions on your logs.

But don't stop here! Your approved food source policy is a living document, and will change over time. When you discover areas of non-compliance in your establishment, use them as opportunities to improve, and return to your policy to incorporate the changes. In this way, you will continue to improve.

To summarize, here are the key steps to consider with any policy:

- **Include the key people at the table**
- **Identify the most important steps in your processes**
- **Check that your policy answers the questions: who, what, when, where, why and how**
- **Ensure that your policy includes corrective actions**
- **Revise the policy based on problems that arise, or as your food processes change**

Remember, if you don't train your employees on your approved food source policy, it won't do much to help your establishment. So check out the next document, a Manager's Guide to training your employees.

