

Responsible RestartOhio

Self-Service Food Stations in Food Service Operations and Retail Food Establishments



Requirements

All retail food establishments (including convenience stores, gas stations and grocery stores) that are regulated under Ohio Department of Agriculture authority, and all food service operations (including restaurants and catering facilities/services) that are regulated under Ohio Department of Health authority, must follow Ohio mandates for social distancing, masking, congregating, and responding to confirmed cases of COVID-19 as outlined in the Director's Second Amended Order for Social Distancing, Facial Coverings and Non-Congregating.

NOTE: Employers and businesses will likely be unable to determine whether or not employees and customers/patrons have been vaccinated. As such, they may choose to continue to require masking, social distancing, and/or other mitigation measures among all employees and customers/patrons, both vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Recommendations

Below are additional recommended best practices for self-service food stations in food service operations and retail food establishments.

General

- Buffet tables/salad bars should be spaced a minimum of 6 feet away from customer seating/tables, and lines should not extend into seating areas.
- Customer flow at buffet tables/salad bars should move in one direction with a beginning point and ending point, and unvaccinated customers must maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing while in line. Directional signage should be posted indicating where the customer line begins.
- Hand sanitizer should be placed at self-serve food stations, including at the front of the line and end of the line of buffet tables/salad bars, and used by customers prior to, and after, serving themselves.
- At least 6 feet of social distancing should be maintained between seated customers and customers in line for a buffet/salad bar and should be monitored by employees.
- Serving utensils should be replaced or cleaned and sanitized at least hourly. It is recommended that customers use disposable napkins, tissues, wax paper, etc., when handling serving utensils, and operators of self-service food stations are encouraged to make them available. A trash receptacle should be conveniently located.
- Use of individually packaged condiments is recommended instead of shared or bulk condiment dispensers.
- Commonly touched surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized frequently.
- While in operation, self-serve areas should be continually monitored by staff who are trained in food safety, including monitoring customer hand sanitizing practices at the self-service food station.
- Food must be protected from contamination, including sneeze guards on self-serve equipment.
- Signage should be placed at self-service food stations requiring customers to use hand sanitizer before and after serving themselves, and requiring unvaccinated customers to maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing while in line. The signage should recommend that customers use disposable napkins, tissues, wax paper, etc., when handling serving utensils.