

After a Fire:

Food Salvaging and Disposal

Fire damaged caused by smoke, fumes, heat and chemicals must be carefully evaluated to determine if food is safe.

Determining the extent of damage from smoke contamination is difficult. Smoke can be carried inside refrigeration units by circulating fans on the units even though the doors may not have been opened during the fire. Food display cases that are loosely covered or poorly sealed can be easily infiltrated by smoke.

When trying to determine the extent of fire damage, it is important to consider the type of packaging in which the food is stored.

- Smoke smell & taste lingers on packages and may be absorbed by foods that may otherwise look ok.
- To examine distressed foods by smell, remove them to an area where the smoke odor or fire is not present.
- Visually inspect for smoke damage
 - o Smoke damage appears more clearly on flexible plastic surfaces (bread bags).
 - o Using a clean paper towel or tissue, wipe a package to detect traces of smoke/soot.
 - o Individually wrapped candies, packaged nuts in the shell, etc., may be less susceptible to contamination
 - o Pasta, baked goods, unwrapped candies and nuts must be closely scrutinized.

It is recommended that your insurance company and a licensed salvager be contacted for advice and evaluation (*salvagers may be found in the Yellow Pages under "Salvage Merchandise"*).

FOODS THAT MUST BE DISCARDED...

- Food in open containers
- Food in paper or cardboard containers
- Disposable utensils or containers, or single-service items in opened sleeves or liners
- Any food or disposable utensils that show water or heat damage
- Food with screw-type lids
- Refrigerated or frozen foods that have been above 41°F for more than 4 hours.
- Ice in ice bins
- Cans that are dented or rusty.

FOODS THAT MAY BE SALVAGED...

- Unopened canned foods IF:
 - ✓ Labels are intact however, labels must be removed and the can re-labeled with a permanent marker prior to cleaning and sanitizing as described below
 - ✓ Cans are not dented along any seam (*side seam, top or bottom seam*)
 - ✓ Cans do not show any signs of swelling, leaking, or loss of vacuum (*for example, puffy ends, pinhole leaks on metal, etc.*)
 - ✓ Cans are not rusty
 - ✓ Cans have been cleaned and sanitized using a 100 parts per million (ppm) sanitizing solution (*see reverse for directions on preparing sanitizing solution*).

After a Fire:

Cleaning Up Your Food Facility

After a fire, food products, utensils and equipment may be contaminated due to smoke, extreme heat, and fire-extinguishing chemicals and toxic fumes released from burning materials. A fire may directly or indirectly affect foods in ways that could endanger the health of the public. All food exposed to fire and/or fire extinguishing chemicals/water should be considered contaminated! You must stop food service until corrections are made and safe food service can be restored.

Once the fire has been extinguished and it is safe to enter your facility...

#1 First CHECK:

- Safety of structure (follow instructions on any warning sign placed by the building and/or fire department)
- Safety and availability of electrical, natural gas, and other power supplies
- Potable water supply and sewer system (be sure to use potable water for cleanup activities)
- For presence of toxic chemicals/toxic fumes released from burning materials and/or fire extinguishers
- With insurance company and/or licensed food salvager for possible recovery of loss.

#2 Then REMOVE and DISCARD:

- Food stored in permeable packaging such as cardboard, plastic wrap, screw-top jars, bottles etc.
- Food stored at room temperature in cabinets and on shelves in areas where the food could have been contaminated.
- Food stored in refrigerators or freezers that have become contaminated. The refrigerator seals may not be airtight and fumes can get inside.
- Food packaged in cans or jars that have been exposed to heat.
- Only food in commercially sealed, undamaged, unopened, water proof airtight metal cans may be considered safe once the containers are cleaned and sanitized.

#3 Then CLEAN, then SANITIZE:

- Food contact surfaces, work stations, and dining tables
- Utensils, dishes, silverware, and glassware
- Exterior surfaces of equipment and furniture
- Interior surfaces of equipment such as refrigerators, sinks, trash containers, etc.
- All floors, floorsinks, and walls
- Contact your service technician for the proper flushing and sanitizing of equipment such as dishwashers, water softeners, beverage dispensers, and ice machines.

#4 Finally, BEFORE OPENING FOR BUSINESS, VERIFY:

- Toilets and handwashing stations with soap and paper towels are available.
- Refrigeration and/or freezer units are capable of maintaining food temperatures at or below 41°F.
- Hot holding units are capable of maintaining food temperatures at or above 135°F.
- Damaged food has been removed from sale.
- All food is protected from contamination.

HOW TO MAKE A SANITIZING SOLUTION

Use 1 **tablespoon of household bleach (6% sodium hypochlorite) for each gallon of water.** This will provide a solution of 100 – 200 parts-per-million (ppm) chlorine and is suitable for sanitizing all cleaned food contact surfaces, canned foods, and equipment.

1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons or ½ fluid ounce.