

## GUIDANCE FOR SALAD BARS, BUFFETS, AND OTHER SELF-SERVICE AREAS

### Purpose

On April 23, 2020, Governor Brad Little issued the Idaho Rebounds steps to reopen Idaho after COVID-19. It is a four-phased program to slowly reopen businesses and services that had been closed. Phase Two addresses the reopening of restaurant dining rooms, which went into effect on May 16, 2020. This guidance provides recommendations for food service establishments that wish to resume their self-service operations. Food service establishments that have self-serve food areas can resume those operations if they can meet the Governor's current [Stay Healthy Order](#). However, it is recommended to utilize a cafeteria-style model. This guidance provides recommendations for safe operation of salad bars, buffets, and other self-service areas. The goal is to minimize the possibility of spreading the virus in food service settings.

### Recommended Actions

- Ensure that all foods are prepared, handled and kept in accordance with the standards of the Idaho Food Code.
- Keep all time/temperature controlled for safety (TCS) foods at the self-service areas within proper temperatures:
  - Cold foods must be kept at 41 degrees Fahrenheit and below
  - Hot foods must be kept at 135 degrees Fahrenheit and above
- Check food temperatures often. Ensure thermometers used are calibrated often and properly.
- If you must hold food at room temperature, be sure not to reuse, and discard any food items that have been on display. Use labels or another system to indicate how long food has been on display for.
- Examine all food for spoilage, damage, expiration, or evidence of tampering or pest activity prior to displaying.
- Ensure that all food items are protected from cross contamination. Whenever possible, cover all food items with lids.
- All equipment and utensils used in a service line must be made of approved materials, be maintained in good repair, and in a clean manner free from contamination.
- Use sneeze guards over buffet and salad bar areas to prevent contamination of displayed food. Ensure that the existing sneeze guards are adequate. Add to existing sneeze guards if necessary.
- Consider removing decorative objects, papers, and other unneeded materials from counters or the top of the sneeze guard to prevent contamination of food and to allow for thorough sanitization of unobstructed surfaces.
- Ensure that customers do not congregate around the self-service area.
- If feasible, place directional arrows to ensure one-way flow of customers at or around self-service areas.

- Implement social distancing protocols for customers waiting in line inside or outside the facility. A minimum distance of 6 feet between customers must be maintained at all times. A practical method of doing this would be to place tape on the floor to act as markers for where customers should stand to ensure social distancing.
- Ensure that signage is placed in the self-service areas informing customers to practice social distancing, not congregate, and to use a new cup and/or plate each time.
- Allocate one staff member (or more if necessary) per shift to monitor social distancing and remove any contaminated food or utensils.
- Change, clean, and sanitize serving utensils (e.g., tongs, bulk food dispenser spoons) every 30 minutes.
- Ensure that customers use clean cups, plates, and cutlery when they revisit the buffet for refills. Cups, plates, and cutlery should only be used **once**.
- Consider having employees plate food for customers and provide clean cups, plates, cutlery and napkins.
- Where feasible, provide single use/disposable utensils for dishing out food.
- If choosing not to utilize single use utensils, consider providing gloves or napkins for customers entering self-service line.
- Encourage handwashing and hand sanitizer use among customers before using self-service area. Provide hand sanitizer at the beginning of each service line and post signage requesting use before handling utensils. Consider touchless sanitizer dispensers to reduce any contamination on the dispenser.
- It is strongly recommended that all employees and customers wear a cloth or disposable face covering when they may be near (less than 6 feet from) other people in the restaurant. It is encouraged that businesses provide face coverings for employees and customers. If provided, they must be single use or properly laundered using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.
- Encourage customers to wear face coverings or disposable face masks while at the self-service line.
- Employees that are processing payment transactions and also handing bags/containers of food to customers should wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer between customers. If glove use is chosen as a preventive measure, an employee must wash hands before donning a fresh pair of gloves. When paying, have the customer insert their chip card/swipe their credit card into the payment device themselves to minimize contact with items from others. If a signature is required on a credit card slip, sanitize the pen that was used by the customer.
- Managers need to be extra diligent in communicating with staff and monitoring staff closely to ensure that employees:
  - Wash hands frequently and whenever required by the Idaho Food Code.
  - Ensure that the handwashing policy is posted in a place every employee can easily review it as needed.
  - Always keep all hand washing sinks stocked with soap, paper towels, and an adequate supply of warm water.
  - Wear gloves when handling ready to eat foods.
  - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
  - Stay home if showing or reporting any signs or symptoms of illness.

- Thoroughly detail, clean and sanitize self-service lines and the entire facility. Establishments should frequently clean and disinfect door handles, surfaces of doors that people may touch to open or close the door, handrails, countertops, reusable menus, digital ordering devices, cash register areas and other high touch surfaces. A list of recommended EPA registered disinfectants to use can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sarscov-2>
- Conduct daily checks for symptoms of illness and ensure employees stay home when they are sick with fever, coughing, shortness of breath, other respiratory illness symptoms, or symptoms of gastrointestinal illness.
- Employers should follow local and state requirements when it comes to face coverings, which the CDC recommends as an effective tool to mitigate risk from individuals who show COVID-19 symptoms.

### Resources:

- CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Print Resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- CDC Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- CDC When and How to Wash Your Hands <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
- National Restaurant News - National Restaurant Association releases coronavirus reopening guide for industry <https://www.nrn.com/operations/national-restaurant-association-releases-coronavirus-reopening-guide-industry>
- State of Idaho Official Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>
- Central District Health COVID-19 Websites: <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus> | <https://www.cdh.idahog.gov/dac-resources>
- Central District Health Call Center: (208-321-2222 M-F 8:30-4:30)

### Sources:

CDC, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>