

**Conference for Food Protection
2020 Issue Form**

Issue: 2020 III-022

Council Recommendation:	Accepted as Submitted _____	Accepted as Amended _____	No Action _____
Delegate Action:	Accepted _____	Rejected _____	

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Issue History:

This is a brand new Issue.

Title:

Amend 2017 Food Code to improve the sanitary transport of wet wiping cloths

Issue you would like the Conference to consider:

The 2017 Food Code addresses only two states for wet wiping cloths.

- 1) Held in sanitary solution.
- 2) in use.

The Food Code does not account for a "third" state of sanitary towel use that is a reality in restaurants and bars.

- 3) The sanitary transportation of the cloth between 1 & 2 above.

Public Health Significance:

The ability to sanitize and use a vessel to carry wet wiping cloths would significantly reduce wet wiping cloths' exposure to and spreading of harmful microorganisms to tables, counters, utensils, equipment surfaces, and thus the public.

Recommended Solution: The Conference recommends...:

That section 3-304.14 (B)(2)(3) of the 2017 Food Code be amended to read;

3-304.14 Wiping Cloths, Use Limitation.

(A) Cloths in-use for wiping FOOD spills from TABLEWARE and carry out containers that occur as FOOD is being served shall be:

- (1) Maintained dry; and
- (2) Used for no other purpose.

(B) Cloths in-use for wiping counters and other EQUIPMENT surfaces shall be:

- (1) Held between uses in a chemical sanitizer solution at a concentration specified under § 4-501.114; and

(2) Transported in a manner that prevents cross contamination of tables, counters, utensils, and equipment surfaces and

~~(2)~~ (3) Laundered daily as specified under ¶ 4-802.11(D).

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Supporting Attachments:

- "OBSERVATIONS TO SUPPORT BIENNIAL MEETING ISSUE SUBMITTAL"
- "Yepiz-Gomez and Gerba Study Abstract"
- "Yepiz-Gomez and Gerba Study Excerpts with Data"

It is the policy of the Conference for Food Protection to not accept Issues that would endorse a brand name or a commercial proprietary process.

ATTACHMENT 1

OBSERVATIONS TO SUPPORT BIENNIAL MEETING ISSUE SUBMITTAL

As a 40 year restaurant professional, one of the least hygienic practices I have consistently observed, is the treatment of wiping cloths. There have been studies conducted that provide detailed scientific information on the topic.

Despite clear intent of the Food Code that a cloth be either “in use”, or “stored in sanitary solution”, this is not the practice in the restaurant world. Restaurant workers must multi task to be efficient in their work. To that end, the wet wiping cloth so prevalent is commonly stashed in a pants pocket, dirty apron, an armpit, or my favorite, the back of one’s pants!!

As a solution in the past, I have offered staff various holsters and bags to carry their cloths – none of these were made of materials that could be sanitized, and in the end, may have been contributing to the cloths’ cross contamination.

A method and/or vessel should be required that can be sanitized along with the wiping cloth, light and flexible enough for them to easily put a wiping cloth in it, and be able to transport it to the location to be “in use”, all while maintaining the efficiency desired by the employer.

ATTACHMENT 2

Identity and Numbers of Bacteria Present on Tabletops and in Dishcloths Used to Wipe Down Tabletops in Public Restaurants and Bars

M. Susana Yepiz-Gomez, Kelly R. Bright, and Charles P. Gerba

CATEGORIES: [FOOD SERVICE](#), [CLEANING MEASUREMENT](#), [IEQ MEASUREMENT](#), [HEALTH & HYGIENE](#)

TAGGED: [MEASUREMENT](#), [DISINFECTING](#), [SANITIZING SURFACES](#), [BACTERIA](#), [CLEANING MEASUREMENT](#), [FOOD SERVICE](#), [RESTAURANTS](#), [BARS](#), [E. COLI](#), [TABLETOPS](#), [DISHCLOTHS](#)

[1 comments](#)

Abstract

Dishcloths used in restaurants and bars (23 restaurant cloths, 14 bar cloths) were collected, and tabletops (10 restaurants) were swabbed, to determine the occurrence of bacteria. Coliforms were isolated from 89.2% of dishcloths and 70% of tabletops. *Escherichia coli* was isolated from 54.1% of dishcloths and 20% of tabletops. The numbers of heterotrophic plate count bacteria (HPC) and coliforms were significantly higher in bars than in restaurants. The levels of HPC found in dishcloths were 25-fold and coliforms were 60- to 120-fold lower than the levels found in home dishcloths reported in previous studies. The numbers recovered from restaurant tabletops were also lower than those from household kitchen countertops. The most commonly isolated genera from dishcloths in restaurants and bars differed from those in homes. **The numbers found for heterotrophic plate count bacteria (HPC) on restaurant tabletops were 45-fold greater after cleaning than prior to cleaning.** There were also a 19-fold greater number of coliforms and twice as many *E. coli*. Therefore, although the mandatory use of sanitizers in restaurants and bars may have reduced contamination levels and caused a shift in the microbial populations present in food service establishments, the implication of dishcloths in contamination of tabletops through cleaning suggests that current monitoring of linen sanitation solutions might be inadequate.

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Food Protection Trends – November 2006

Identity and Numbers of Bacteria Present on Tabletops and in Dishcloths Used
to Wipe Down Tabletops in Public Restaurants and Bars: Created on April 9th,
2010. Last Modified on April 9th, 2010

ATTACHMENT 3

Occurrence of Bacteria in Dishcloths Used in Restaurants and Survival of Respiratory Viruses on Produce

Item Type text;	Electronic Dissertation
Authors	Yepiz, Maria Susana
Publisher	The University of Arizona.
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Greater numbers of bacteria were found on tabletops that had been cleaned with a dishcloth than before cleaning (Fig.1.5.3). Approximately 3.56×10^3 cfu/156 cm² heterotrophic plate count bacteria were found before cleaning. This number increased to 1.6×10^5 cfu/156 cm² (45-fold increase) after the tables were wiped down with a dishcloth. Likewise, the numbers increased for total coliforms (4.9 to 92.2 cfu/156 cm²) and E. coli (< 1 to 2.3 cfu/156 cm²) following cleaning.

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Although this study was fairly small, it raises several interesting questions. For instance, although the bacterial numbers found in food service establishments were lower than the number found in homes, considerable numbers of coliforms and E. coli were still present. This could represent a danger to the public, especially for populations at risk including the very young, the elderly and the immunocompromised. Also, because the bacterial numbers found on tabletops after wiping with a cloth were higher than the numbers prior to cleaning, the use of such cloths in restaurants and bars could contribute to contamination of surfaces and to the spread of potentially harmful bacteria. Therefore, more careful monitoring of linen sanitization solutions used by food service establishments such as restaurants and bars might be called for