

We all see the signs in the bathrooms of restaurants stating the rules for employees washing their hands on each trip to the lavatory. But there are some other places in restaurants where the washing and cleaning doesn't always get the top priority. And it is making your clients sick. Take a moment to read over some of my pet peeves when visiting restaurants regarding cleanliness and be honest with yourself. Are you paying attention to these details? If not, this may explain why some of your customers only visit once.

Let's face it, people have different tolerances for cleanliness in restaurants but if you are overlooking some of these areas that I will discuss below, you may be running off a certain percentage of your repeat customer business and the fixes for these are cheap and easy.

Bear in mind that if you are a restaurant that serves food that is sometimes eaten by your customers without utensils, then this problem gets magnified. That means breads, rolls, French fries and so on. You get the idea. If I'm eating with my hands, then I don't want to touch anything that I perceive to be dirty while I am visiting your restaurant. And this perception can sometimes have little to do with the actual bacteria count. So consider that your restaurant needs to not only be clean, but also to look and feel clean.

Are your tables clean? A tablecloth certainly helps this problem because it removes the tactile feeling of filth. So often I enter a restaurant and the busboy takes a pretty filthy rag and makes a cursory wipe at the table just before or even after I sit down. Done right, this procedure can assure me that you are doing all that you can to allow me to eat in a sanitary environment. But if the rag is dirty, stained or otherwise looks inept at the job, or if the job is done in a cursory way, then you are emphasizing to me that this establishment doesn't put a high priority on keeping things clean. Take the time to train your staff and give them the tools to make this a show of effort on your part to prove your dedication to sanitation in your restaurant. Also, it goes without saying that if I am sitting at a table that is in any way sticky, I'm losing my appetite. So show us your care and then make sure that the table really is clean.

Are your menus clean? So many restaurants don't pay close attention to their menus but this is the face of your restaurant to your patrons. If your menus are sticky or greasy or otherwise feel that they have been handled by too many other hands (and they have) then reminding me of it by letting me see or feel the grunge is a big turn off. Take the time to regularly clean your menus as they are a very important first impression.

How about your salt and pepper shakers? These are handled by almost every patron that eats in your restaurant. They are a haven for germs and bacteria and I remember this almost every time I reach for one and feel that it is sticky or just feels dirty to the touch. Take the time to clean these regularly to protect your clients and to keep their impression of your restaurant favorable.

These are just a few of my pet peeves and I am giving you an outsiders view of things you may forget about or take for granted and you rush around to deal with the daily pressures of running your restaurant. But they leave impressions on a certain percentage of your diners and you should take the time to establish policies that will not only protect your customers but will put your restaurant in the best light in their minds As a side note, you also have a lot to worry about trying to keep up with food borne illness issues to keep your customers safe. To keep up with what is going on in that arena, be sure to keep an eye on the blog at <http://blog.usfoodsafety.com/>

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