

# Consumer Food Safety Fears Continue to Grow

How food manufacturers, suppliers, and establishments make it their joint responsibility to ensure that the public is safe from various food safety hazards.

By **Anna Sison-Soriano**



There is more to food safety than just cleaning food and washing hands. The recent Chinese toxic milk scandal shows food safety should always be a central issue—a top priority for food manufacturers and foodservice establishments. Social responsibility from food supplier chains and foodservice providers has increased concerns to serve not just appetizing, but SAFE food for consumers. Cost alone should not be the basis for choosing food service suppliers. Knowing the integrity of raw materials and the manufacturing practices used are key to food safety, and the tool that judicious food operators should arm themselves with.

## ENSURING QUALITY

It is not surprising that food giant **San Miguel Pure Foods Great Food Solutions (GFS)** takes food safety seriously. According to **Food Safety Manager Elaine Nantes**, food-manufacturing plants should establish and implement a **Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)**-based quality system to control food safety hazards. It is a must that basic Food Hygiene or Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) are in place.

## QUALITY WAY OF LIFE

Nantes explains, "For preventing food defects other than food safety hazards, the built-in defect-prevention quality management system practiced in San Miguel is consistently implemented and continually improved." For **Monterey** meat and **Magnolia** chicken, the slaughter and dressing of the animals are done in the safest and cleanest possible ways, complying with domestic and international practices. "The freshness of our meat and meat products are maintained through proper cold chain management from the time they are processed until they are delivered to customers," assures Nantes.

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## QUALITY MANAGEMENT CHAIN

Once the products leave their manufacturer and are received by the purchaser, quality assurance has to be maintained. At **Edsa Shangri-La Hotel**, food safety is brought to a whole new level. The hotel follows the "food flow"—the path the food takes from the supplier, to purchasing, receiving department, storage, until the last stage where the food is served to the guest.

## SUPPLIER LINKS

**Erlyn Dungao, Hygiene and Sanitation Manager** for Edsa Shangri-La Hotel accredits and audits suppliers before the hotel purchases from them. "We have a checklist to rate the

supplier. We check if they have proper storage facilities, proper training, business permits, appropriate food equipment. If the supplier gets a failing mark, purchasing cannot order from that supplier. If the chefs have a preferred supplier, they ask me to check them out."

## RECEIVING END

The hotel employs the services of a receiving supervisor, in charge of receiving and checking all approved items. Every detail is checked from the quality, weight, expiration dates, production dates and especially the temperatures. "We have a standard temperature for receiving. If we ordered chilled items, they should arrive at chilled temperature. The same applies to frozen items. If they are not delivered at the proper temperature, these items get rejected."

## TRAINING FOR EXCELLENCE

Edsa Shangri-La has the distinct honor of being the first hotel in the Philippines to be HACCP-certified. From implementing color-coding labels

MONTEREY

PRODUCE AND DELIVER PROCESS



1

Receiving



2

Slaughtering



3

Fabricating



4

Dispatching

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of each food item (tracking expiration dates and applying the First-In, First-Out rule), to enforcing strict maintenance of temperatures (varies for each meal and per product category), Edsa Shangri-La exemplifies food safety as an ongoing collaborative effort.

Of course, chefs are responsible for overseeing that food safety is observed in their kitchens. All the chefs, food servers and food personnel at Edsa Shangri-La are given intensive training and refresher courses on food safety. Sous Chefs are all food safety certified. “We have the Shangri-La Food Safety Management System (SFSMS), an internal program that certifies our hotel chefs are knowledgeable in food safety,” says Dungao.

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At the moment, Edsa Shangri-La is working on its HALAL certification and planning for its ISO 22000 certification. “Since we are HACCP-certified, we try to document everything related to food safety. We record everything, implement preventive measures and take proactive approaches. We do these things to avoid food safety obstacles before they become a problem,” elaborates Dungao.

GREAT FOOD SOLUTIONS PROMISE

San Miguel Pure Foods (SMPF) has built a solid reputation of producing food products made from the safest and freshest ingredients. More than just a well-known brand, SMPF continues to attract hordes of loyal consumers because of its quality and excellent value for money. Not banking on reputation alone, SMPF has set the bar high in terms of keeping their food safe.

GFS, the foodservice arm for all the SMPF products, is backed with the highest quality standards and guiding principles, alongside impressive figures. To date, SMPF has received numerous certifications, a testament to its continuing commitment of producing safe and high quality food products. These certifications include 53 food-manufacturing plants with GMP certifications, 41 food establishments with HACCP-certified food products, two ISO 22000:2005 certified food facilities, and 16 plants with HALAL-certified food products.

“Our frontliners are all ServSafe certified food protection managers. As a service, we conduct food safety training for our valued customers. We recognize the need of the foodservice industry to deliver nutritious, high quality and safe food,” boasts Helene Pontejos, General Manager of GFS.

While rising food costs is foremost on everyone’s mind, consumers should be equally concerned about foodservice supplier’s quality management system in discriminating and maintaining quality supply of raw materials. At GFS, easing food safety concerns and letting food operators have a worry-free day is part of their great food safety solution.

Pontejos concludes, “It is our social responsibility to take care of customers and consumers. All humans have the right to eat. It is expected that when they eat food, it will satisfy and nourish them. Whatever you add into your products during processing and delivery will affect the total quality of your food products including its safety.”

How Food Becomes Unsafe

Being the foodservice arm of San Miguel Pure Foods, GFS prides itself as the “Home of quality products and people.” GFS’ Eva Souza, Product Development Manager and Certified Food Protection Manager and Instructor shares thoughts on risk factors associated with food-borne illnesses, as gleaned from NRA Solutions ServSafe Essentials:

- 1. PURCHASING FROM UNSAFE SOURCES** Food can become contaminated at any point in the supply chain. It is the foodservice operator’s responsibility to purchase food only from approved suppliers—one that has been inspected and meets all applicable city, municipality, and national laws.
- 2. TIME TEMPERATURE ABUSE** Food has been time-temperature abused when it has been allowed to remain too long at temperatures 41°F to 135°F or 5°C to 57°C (Temperature Danger Zone), which favor growth of food-borne microorganisms.
- 3. CROSS CONTAMINATION** Cross-contamination occurs when microorganisms are transferred from one surface of food to another.
- 4. CONTAMINATED EQUIPMENT** All food-contact surfaces in the establishment must be cleaned and sanitized on a scheduled basis to prevent food-borne illness.
- 5. POOR PERSONAL HYGIENE** Individuals with poor personal hygiene can offend customers, contaminate food or food-contact surfaces, and cause illnesses.