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PEST SOLUTIONS SINCE 1904

**Simple Solutions for
Minimizing Pest Risk
in Restaurants through
Storage and Design**

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The Restaurant Environment

Restaurants are generally considered high risk for pests for a number of reasons:

- 1. Food prep** – Food is out in the open during preparation and cooking, attracting pests that may already be in the facility or that are in the exterior of the facility
- 2. Employees** – Employees and their practices have the potential to bring a microbiological risk to the food they're preparing or serving, but they can also bring in pests (such as cockroaches or bed bugs) from the places they've been
- 3. Customers** – Just like employees, customers have the potential to introduce cockroaches and bed bugs into a restaurant environment
- 4. Vendors** – Vendors themselves can bring in pests (such as cockroaches), but more likely is that the product they bring in has a pest population (most commonly rodents, flies, and cockroaches)
- 5. Food storage** – The way we store food can either attract and harbor pests or it can protect the food that we are using to cook
- 6. Kitchen design** – While the back of the house has to be designed for efficiency, typically it is not designed for pest prevention, yielding lots of hiding places for pests and areas for food residues to build up
- 7. Dining room design** – Dining rooms are typically designed with the customer and ambiance in mind and not to minimize pest hiding places or food debris accumulation

Policies, training, and proactive pest management will mitigate a good portion of this risk, particularly for numbers one through four on the list where human behavior is a significant source of the risk. A pest-conscious restaurant can take simple steps for numbers five through seven, as well.

Design

Most pests need three things to survive: **food, water, and shelter**. Reducing the potential for pests to find any of the three in a restaurant is an important step to take when reducing risk. There are two important rules to remember when surveying a restaurant for pest potential:

1. Generally 80% of a pest population is found in 20% of the facility, meaning most pests are going to be in a few spaces.
2. If it's hard to clean, it won't be cleaned (or at least not often, well, or without it being on a strict sanitation schedule).



When you look at your facility with those rules as your perspective, it's easy to find the areas that have the likelihood for hiding pests or providing food for pests. Do the following to reduce those areas:

- Use COP (clean-out-of-place) equipment instead of CIP (clean-in-place) equipment where possible. Equipment that rolls to the side or can be physically lifted to clean under, behind, and within is much easier to keep clean than equipment that is bolted to the floor/counter/wall or is simply too heavy to move.
- If CIP equipment is used, allow enough space behind under it to ensure cleaning is possible.
- Equipment itself must be cleaned. Look for cracks and crevices that pests such as cockroaches prefer to hide in or that food accumulates in. Wheels/casters of equipment, removable panels, seams of the equipment, etc. All have the potential to hide pests.
- Make a list of everything that could harbor food or pests and create a sanitation schedule to ensure that someone is responsible for cleaning it at a specific frequency. Use your Pest Control Operator to help you with this list, they know where the pests might be hiding out.
- Structurally, do your best to eliminate cracks and crevices. Certainly any crack that is allowing a pest entry into the restaurant should be sealed, but reducing indoor cracks and crevices can be just as important. For example, we often find small fly maggots in grout lines of an old tile floor. Eliminating those grout lines with a smooth floor will eliminate the potential for flies to develop there.
- Similarly, choose floor tile that covers the joint between the wall and the floor to prevent food build-up and hiding places/entry for cockroaches, ants, and flies. This makes for easier cleaning and less risk of water/food being built up in cracks.
- In the dining room, booths that are secured to the floor are great harborage for pests. Food from customers settles into the cracks and cockroaches or rodents hide underneath. If possible, use seating that allows you either move it to clean, or opens up so that the inside of the seating (under cushions or mats) can be cleaned.



Storage

Storage for a restaurant is typically not a priority, but definitely a necessity. From dishware to cleaning supplies and dry goods to frozen goods, everything must go somewhere. If not stored properly, these items will attract or hide pests.

Steps to minimize pest risk via storage can include:

- In all areas, reduce clutter. Cockroaches and rodents are cryptobiotic, which means they prefer to stay hidden. If we reduce the clutter, we reduce hiding places for them. A good shelving system and storage bins can greatly reduce clutter.
- Use sealed containers to store dry ingredients in. Flour, pasta, spices, etc. are best preserved in thick plastic or metal containers that easily close and keep pests out. Clear ones allow for a visual inspection of infestation, vital for finding stored product pests, which will typically be in the bottom inch of a bulk bin containing peanuts, flour, spices, cocoa, or other dry goods. Rodents will gnaw through packages, so don't assume that just because a package is sealed that the food is safe within, transfer it to a sturdy plastic or metal container.
- Keep food on shelving racks that keep it at least 6 inches off the ground. This allows for cleaning underneath the storage, eliminates a hiding place for pests, and makes it less accessible for pests.
- Keep shelving racks far enough away from the wall so that the wall can be cleaned, or have movable racks to allow for cleaning under and behind the area. This will also allow your pest management provider room for inspection and placement of monitoring and control devices.
- Use shelving and storage containers that are easily cleaned. Stay away from shelving with cracks and crevices that collect debris, or hollow legs that hide debris and pests. Metal or plastic shelving is typically much easier to clean than wood, which will soak up spilt food.
- Hang cleaning tools (mops, brooms, dusters, etc.) from the wall. When resting on the ground or in buckets, these tools provide excellent pest harborage, hiding the pests and providing them food that was previously cleaned up.
- Discard mop water and sanitation bucket water regularly, when left forgotten in a mop room, they attract flies.
- Use open cubbies for shoes and personal gear that are easily inspected for pest presence.
- Storage areas often do not get the structural and sanitational care that the rest of the, more public, facility receives. For this reason, pest entry points are often found here. Ensure that your pest management provider is looking in storage areas and closets.

Partnership

Pests in a restaurant can be scary and frustrating. Choose a pest management provider with commercial pest management experience that forms a partnership with restaurant management. They can identify these hot spots to focus sanitation efforts on and recommend solutions.

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About McCloud Services

Founded in 1904, McCloud Services is a leader in integrated pest management solutions. Dedicated to providing the highest level of pest management services and customer care, the company's programs are designed to target immediate pest concerns with the least possible threat to people, property and the environment. McCloud Services embraces the latest technology innovations and remains at the forefront of the pest management industry. The company's mission is to protect its customer's health, property, food, and the environment while providing the highest level of safety for its employees and the general public. McCloud Services is a regional service provider with locations in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

About the Author

Anna Berry is training manager at McCloud Services. She is a board certified entomologist, member of the Entomological Society of America and is certified in HACCP and ServSafe. Berry holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Oregon and a master's degree in grain science from Kansas State University.

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