



Catering standards on cargo ships

UK Club Risk Assessor, **Captain Markus Westphal**, takes a hard look at catering standards on-board cargo ships and provides useful advice on what crew members can do to keep themselves and their crewmates safe from illness, such as food poisoning.

The importance of good hygiene on-board any vessel cannot be overstated, the following advice has been collated over years of conducting risk assessments and 28 years at sea on-board cargo, bulk and container vessels.

Keep clean

Hands and fingernails should be washed for at least 20 seconds before handling food, using a dedicated hand basin, anti-bacterial liquid soap from a dispenser and disposable paper towels, paying attention to cleaning in between the fingers, thumbs and nails. It is important to wash and dry your hands thoroughly after using the toilet or handling garbage of all types. Smoking in the galley is not allowed.



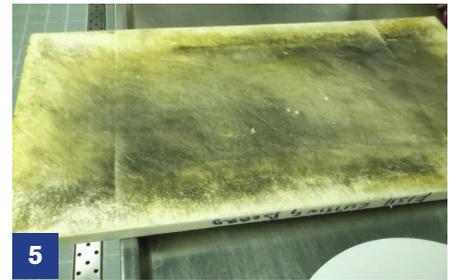
Hand wash basin well equipped with soap and paper towels.



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1. Heavy deposits in the grease trap present a fire hazard. 2. Keep the tin opener clean. 3. Importance of good housekeeping cannot be overstated. 4. Aprons should be washed and kept clean. 5. Stained and worn cutting boards should be replaced. 6. Colour coded knives and cutting boards in use.

In case of small cuts on the hands, blue plasters are used throughout the catering industry. The use of disposable gloves should also be considered.

Cockroaches and other pests sometimes come on-board with the stores. Regular fumigation and vigilance by the crew should keep infestations under control. Cardboard and packing material should be disposed of at the earliest opportunity.

Galley equipment, the range and the extractor hood should be cleaned daily for hygiene reasons as well as avoiding fire hazards. Mesh screens in the extractor should only be removed for cleaning.

Deep fat fryers must be treated with respect, the fire suppression system must be maintained and ready for immediate use. The fire blanket should be placed ready to hand, and the fat

fryer should not be used in heavy weather. The oil should be filtered and changed often. Used oil must be properly disposed of.

Training standards of cooks

Catering staff should be properly trained in food safety and personal hygiene. They should also be trained in garbage management procedures, including proper use of a food waste grinder if the ship is equipped with one.

Menu planning

Menu planning is a requirement under the ILO MLC Regulations. Good menu planning is important to maintain good food store rotation, as well as provide the crew with a varied and balanced diet.

Tin openers

Tin openers are an easy source of cross contamination, and should be kept in good working and hygienic condition.

Separate raw and cooked foods

The risks of cross-contamination can be eliminated by thoroughly cleaning the relevant equipment with soap and hot water when different food groups are to be used (especially raw and cooked foods). It is important to wash hands after handling raw meat, fish, poultry or vegetables.

Keep food covered

Raw food should be kept apart from cooked food or food that requires no further treatment before consumption (e.g. milk). Separate refrigerators should be used if possible, and the possibility of contamination by dripping juices must be avoided.

General housekeeping

The importance of good housekeeping cannot be overstated, keeping the galley area as well as storage tidy will make keeping the galley clean and hygienic much easier.

Cutting boards

Separate chopping boards should be used for the preparation of raw meat and must not be used for the preparation of foods that will be eaten without further cooking. Colour coding is an established way of ensuring separation between the two activities.

Red – Raw Meat

Blue – Raw Fish

Yellow – Cooked Meat

Brown – Vegetables

Green – Salads & Fruit

White – Bakery & Dairy

Food storage

Refrigeration units should be checked regularly to ensure temperatures are set correctly and if they have good circulation.

It is recommended that shelving in fridges are not covered with cardboard, as this can restrict air circulation and may be considered unhygienic. Dry food stores should be kept tidy at all times and checked regularly for food past its useable date.

Cook thoroughly

Raw and previously cooked food should be cooked thoroughly so that the core temperature is above the danger threshold of 65 degrees celsius.

Keep food at safe temperatures

Refrigeration chambers should be kept at the recommended temperatures, Freezers should be -18°C or less. Cool room temperatures should not be higher than 5°C . Door seals and door catches should be maintained in good condition to ensure that there is no air leakage. Door catch releases should be regularly checked for proper function.

Use safe water and raw materials

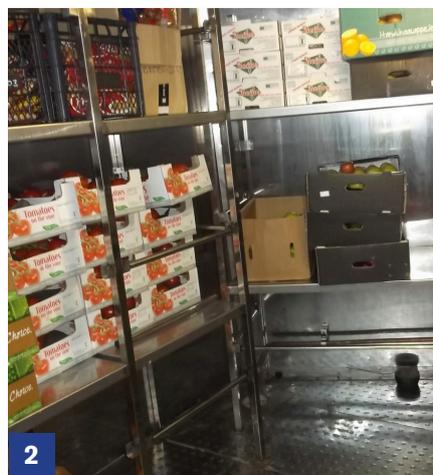
If water is generated on-board, the entire system should be inspected and cleaned regularly. Water purifiers, whether silver ion or UV, should be maintained and kept in use. Records of maintenance should be kept for inspection if so required. Freshwater pumped from ashore should be suitably treated with chemicals.

Garbage management

Keep food waste containers covered and good garbage management by keeping garbage segregated. Disposal of galley garbage, including used cooking oil must be recorded in the garbage log.



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1. Clear guidance for the catering staff.
2. Keeping the stores clean and neat nets benefit.
3. Provisions which are past the usable date should be discarded.
4. The evaporator should be defrosted, covers should be replaced after repairs/maintenance.
5. Shelving in the fridges should be kept in good repair.
6. Food waste containers should be kept covered.

Food waste grinders should be properly maintained. It is recommended that the system is thoroughly flushed after use to avoid blockages and smells.

Masters inspection

The Master should inspect galley and stores for hygiene levels and general housekeeping. Defective galley equipment should be repaired or replaced as necessary.

Safety items

Proper PPE including footwear should be worn in the galley. It is recommended that safety shoes with toe caps are worn to prevent injury. Protective guards and safety devices should not be removed or bypassed.

Tripping and slipping hazards

Good housekeeping should eliminate slipping hazards such as spillages, and tripping hazards such as discarded strapping material are dealt with. Read the Club's dedicated Risk Focus on Slips, Trips and Falls for more.

Proper lifting techniques

While taking stores, personnel should take care to use proper lifting technique when lifting heavy items. Knees should be bent and the back should be straight. They should request assistance immediately if they feel the weight is too much for them. ■



1. Jamming the door shut with a screwdriver means that the door can no longer be released from the inside.
2. Safety footwear should be worn by galley staff.
3. Missing guard on a slicing machine.
4. Broken tiles can present a slipping hazard.
5. Loose rags outside the fridges can be slippery.

About the author

Markus Westphal joined Thomas Miller in 2014 as a Risk Assessor. He previously worked on general cargo vessels, bulk carriers and container vessels, rising to the rank of Master in 2000. As a junior officer, Markus served on salvage tugs and was involved in several salvage operations off the South African coast as well as the development of the Moss gas project off Mosselbay.

During his time at Safmarine, Markus was involved with the introduction of the ISM Code as well as the ISPS Code, his vessels being audited externally and internally.