



## Commonly Missed Cleaning Areas in FOH

According to an article in RestaurantMgmt101, there are few things worse than enjoying a meal at your favorite restaurant and then looking up to see an unappetizing cloud of dust around the air conditioning vents or catching a whiff of an unsavory odor while walking to your table or to the bathroom. No restaurant can afford to lose guests because of a dirty dining room.

Here is a list of the most overlooked areas in the Front Of House. These areas are often overlooked by management and team members but are seldom missed by guests.

- **The Entryway-** This is often considered the most important area of the restaurant because it's the first thing your guests will see when coming to your establishment. The entryway includes; the parking lot, the sidewalks, garden areas, all glass on windows and doors, and the entire foyer. This is a lot to keep up with but if the guest isn't pleased with the entryway they may not go any further. Make sure the parking lot and all sidewalks are swept every morning before opening. All garden areas should be well maintained, trimmed and free of debris. Glass on the windows and doors should be cleaned before each shift and spot cleaned as needed. The foyer is exceptionally important because the guests will likely spend time in this room waiting with little to do but look around. Be sure it is spotless for your guests, make sure the floors are clean, glass is clean and streak free and the room has a clean smell and is clutter free.
- **The Host Stand-** It's common to see cluttered items around the stand such as menus, high chairs/booster seats and employees' personal items. This is unacceptable; every guest will see the host stand during their visit so it is important to keep this area clean and well organized. Menus should always be straightened out and stored only in their designated area. High chairs and booster seats can be neatly stacked in an area away from the host stand, out of sight from the guests, and the host can get them when needed before calling the guests to be seated. As for employees' personal items... well that's easy, ALL employees should leave their personal items in their vehicles or at home. The only items acceptable to bring in would be umbrellas, coats/jackets and keys, with the exception of any items that may be needed for medical reasons. The umbrellas, coats and jackets should be stored in an appropriate place such as a coat closet/rack or umbrella rack and the keys should remain in the employee's pocket. Special consideration may be needed for required medical items, in this case a secure location in the office is possible or the items can be stored in the employee's vehicle and a break can be worked out with the management staff when needed.
- **In-Between and Under Booths/Tables-** Most servers do a good job of cleaning around their tables and booths but few actually clean the booth area properly. Booths should be pulled away from the walls so they can be cleaned properly on the sides and under the booths. Also if the seats are removable, they should be taken off so the groove between the back and the seat can be cleaned. This is very important and should be done every night at closing. During the shift, the floors around the tables and booths should be kept clean and all visible surfaces should be wiped down. Remember : don't pull booths out during business hours; we don't want the guests to be distracted during their meal.

- **Up High-** With the majority of all cleaning projects happening at eye level it's no surprise that most people forget to look up, but you can be sure that some of your guests won't forget. There's a lot happening up there, from ceiling tiles and air vents to lights and fans, even more if you hang artifacts or other items from the ceiling. These areas are quick to collect large amounts of dust which will likely make your guest think twice about returning to your restaurant. To prevent dust build-up, these areas should be cleaned regularly. Cleaning will vary at every restaurant and in every area. We recommend cleaning these areas at least once every two weeks but this interval can be adjusted as needed by the management staff.
- **Server Stations-** Server stations are often setup throughout the dining room to help speed service to the guests, however this means that they are also visible to the guests and can quickly become an eyesore if you're not careful. The problem here is that as the restaurant gets busy, the staff does as well, and they will stack up dishes, trays and anything else they need to in an attempt to save time. The solution to this is simple: as a manager you should be walking the floor to ensure the smoothness of your shift and the happiness of your guests. During these walk-throughs, also check each of the server stations for cleanliness. If needed, delegate cleaning tasks to the servers with the lightest workload. As a manager you can help clean if needed but be careful not to be taken advantage of by your crew members. After each shift, address the issues seen with the staff. Habitual offenders may need one-on-one sit-downs to discuss the problems further.
- **Glass Mats-** Glass mats are common in bar and server stations. This can be very easy to forget about as your stacking clean glasses onto them every day. The mats are usually black or dark in color so it will be hard to see a dirty mat or the dirty surface underneath the mat. It's a good idea to clean the mats and the surfaces under the mats at least once a week. If left untouched, the mats and the surfaces under them will become sticky and can develop different forms of mold.
- **Nozzles-** Every restaurant is going to have some nozzles in use, usually on the soda fountain or on tea urns. These are one of the most forgotten items in every restaurant. People just don't think to take them off the soda fountain or the tea urns but it is very important. Few things will ruin the taste of your guests' drink faster than dirty nozzles used to make them. The nozzles on the soda fountain should be unscrewed and removed along with the inserts under them. Most tea urn nozzles are easy to unscrew from the urn but that's not enough to keep them clean. Again, MOST nozzles found on tea urns can be broken down even further by unscrewing them at the top or center and removing the rubber gasket from inside. Tea nozzles are quick to build up gunk from particles of tea that make it through the filter and from regular use so be sure to clean them well. After removing, breaking down and cleaning all nozzles, we recommend soaking them in a weak quaternary ammonium based sanitizer solution overnight. Be sure to rinse clean thoroughly before putting them back together in the morning. Quaternary solutions are recommended not only for their cleaning power, but also because they will help prevent growth. Don't forget those pesky bar guns.
- **Tea/Coffee Makers-** The tea and coffee makers are rarely thought about during the closing process. Along with the nozzles, this can distort the taste of the beverages cleaning the visible surfaces is not enough. One of the problem areas on these machines are typically in the filter area where the water comes out to brew the coffee/tea. Over time buildup can occur and can soon be followed by mold. Be sure to scrub these areas of your tea/coffee maker's well to prevent this from happening. On many machines the spout where the water comes out can be removed, if so this can be soaked overnight with your nozzles in a quaternary ammonium based sanitizer solution. The other major problem areas on these machines are the filter holders. They will build up faster than anything else on the machine because of the constant and direct contact with the coffee/tea particles. Scrub the filter holders clean every night then run through the dish machine. The last

thing to watch with your coffee/tea maker setups is the urns and coffee pots themselves. Urns and pots can build up quickly for the same reason as the filter holders, constant and direct contact with the particles and liquids. Scrub the urns and pots every night and then run them through the dish machine. Soaking the filter holders, urns and pot with a bleach based cleaner such as Dip It once a month can also be helpful in preventing build up.

- **Ice Bins-** Ice bins are typically found in server stations and in the bar areas of the restaurant and almost always go for long periods of time without being cleaned. If you're not inspecting thoroughly, it can be hard to see, but the bins will eventually start to grow a common pink mold and if left untreated will develop into a thick slime that can be green, brown or black. This slime has a very distinct odor and taste and will definitely not go unnoticed if it manages to get into your guests' drink. It's best to clean the ice bins once per week but make sure to get them at least twice per month. To properly clean the ice bins you need to empty all the ice first. Remove the bulk of the ice with a designated ice bucket and scoop; use hot water to melt the rest. Once empty, scrub the entire bin with a cleaner/sanitizer.

This may seem like a lot to do but when it comes to the safety of your guests and cleanliness of your restaurant, it is worth the extra effort. Break these tasks up amongst your crew members to lighten the workload.