



## Farm Food Safety - Food Contact Surfaces and Materials

### Assessing Food Contact Surfaces and Materials:

Think about the steps involved from harvesting produce to customer sale. Ask yourself these questions:

- What comes in contact with your product?
- What equipment or tools do you use at each step in the process?
- Do any of these steps have the potential to introduce contaminants?
- For example: When harvesting lettuce, what steps are you taking to ensure the knife is clean and the lettuce remains safe from contaminants from harvest to the pack house?

To ensure the safety of your product throughout your operation, use supplies, containers, equipment and surfaces that are made specifically for contact with food.

- For example: When apples are brought into the pack house for sorting, are they being processed on surfaces that can be cleaned and sanitized?

### Choosing Food Contact Surfaces and Materials:

- Look for the NSF International® logo. Any item that is NSF certified (see sidebar to the right) ensures that the product has been independently verified to comply with applicable food contact material safety regulations.
- Use the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Inventory of Effective Food Contact Substances.
- When purchasing new materials, such as containers, or tools, use the supplier as a resource to confirm that items are made of approved food contact materials.

### UNH Cooperative Extension Programs

	Community and Economic Development
	Food and Agriculture ✓
	Natural Resources
	Youth and Family

### WHAT IS NSF International®?

NSF International® is an independent, not-for-profit, accredited organization that develops standards, and tests and certifies products and systems.

They audit the manufacturing process of a product and independently test the product for safety, quality and performance.

Most products certified by NSF will bear the certifier’s mark on the product to help consumers and buyers make educated purchasing decisions.



NSF certification is recognized at the local, state, federal and international levels and implies that a product meets all standard requirements.

### The Cleaning and Sanitizing Process \*

- Wet the area with potable water, rinse off any visible debris.
- Scrub surface with soap or detergent and water to physically remove soil.
- Rinse surface with potable water.
- If applicable, apply sanitizer following manufacturer's directions.
- Allow contact with surface for recommended time.
- Allow surface to air dry. Don't use a cloth towel to dry. Cloth towels can recontaminate the surface.

\*Sanitizing may not be necessary in all cases where a cleaning step is necessary.

See Fact Sheet: *Farm Food Safety - Cleaning and Sanitizing*

**Remember! Your hands are one of the most important food contact surfaces to wash regularly**



Handwashing

- Ask for documentation from the supplier confirming that an item is food grade. Keep this documentation in your records.
- Choose items that can be cleaned and sanitized (unless using a single-use item approved for contact with food).
- Reusing containers:
  - \* Containers that previously held chemicals or other non-food items should *never* be used for food contact (including harvesting, storing and processing).
  - \* Do not reuse materials that are intended for single-use. They are not designed for repeated washing and sanitizing.
  - \* For example: Cardboard clamshells or quart containers cannot be washed and sanitized and should not be reused unless lined with a new plastic bag approved for food contact.
- When deciding whether to reuse a container that previously held a food product, make sure it can be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized, if necessary.

### Cleaning and Sanitizing Food Contact Surfaces:

Cleaning and sanitizing decreases the number of microbes that come in contact with food products.

For smaller items such as knives and containers, cleaning and sanitizing can be done in a three compartment sink. The first compartment contains detergent solution; the second compartment contains rinse water; and the third compartment contains sanitizing solution. Hot water, if available, will do a better job of removing soil and food particles. Sanitizing solutions are best when used at room temperature.

For larger, freestanding equipment or surfaces that come in contact with food, use a three-part (or bucket) system consisting of wash, rinse and sanitize.

- For example: If apples are placed directly on a tabletop during sorting, the tabletop needs to be cleaned, rinsed, and in some cases sanitized.

Commonly used chemical sanitizers include chlorine, iodine, peroxyacetic (peracetic) acid and quaternary ammonium compounds, also known as "quats." Choose sanitizers labeled for your intended use. Keep in mind that any sanitizer with an EPA registration number is a pesticide, and all relevant state pesticide regulations that apply to your operation need to be followed.

Water temperature, water hardness, and pH affect sanitizer concentration. Use test strips to measure sanitizer concentration. Test concentration after mixing and during use.



**Created: February 2018**

**Updated: April 2019**

**Visit our website:**  
**[extension.unh.edu](https://extension.unh.edu)**

UNH Cooperative Extension brings information and education into the communities of the Granite State to help make New Hampshire's individuals, businesses, and communities more successful and its natural resources healthy and productive. For 100 years, our specialists have been tailoring contemporary, practical education to regional needs, helping create a well-informed citizenry while strengthening key economic sectors.

*The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.*

### **About the Authors**

Jessica Sprague is a former Food Safety Field Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension. This face sheet was reviewed and edited by Food Safety Area of Expertise and F.S.M.A. (Food Safety Modernization Act) Team members.

### **For More Information**

State Office  
Taylor Hall  
59 College Road  
Durham, NH 03824  
<https://extension.unh.edu>

### **Education Center and Information Line**

[answers@unh.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu)  
1-877-EXT-GROW  
(1-877-398-4769)  
9 am - 2 pm M-F  
<http://extension.unh.edu>

