Step-by-Step Food Safety Guide for the Back of House (BOH)

# Step 1: Personal Hygiene

* Hand Washing Protocol: Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before starting work, after using the restroom, after touching raw food, and whenever hands become contaminated.
* Proper Glove Use: Always wear gloves when handling ready-to-eat foods. Change gloves between tasks, especially after handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood.
* Maintain Clean Uniforms: Wear clean clothing, aprons, and hair restraints (e.g., hats, hairnets). Avoid wearing jewelry that can fall into food.
* No Touching Face or Hair: Avoid touching your face, hair, or body during food preparation. Wash hands immediately if you do.
* Report Illness: If you experience symptoms of illness (vomiting, diarrhea, fever), report it to your supervisor and do not handle food.

# Step 2: Proper Food Storage

* FIFO Method: Follow the 'First In, First Out' (FIFO) method to rotate stock. Use older products first to minimize waste and reduce the risk of expired items.
* Temperature Control: Store perishable items at the correct temperatures—refrigerated items at 40°F (4°C) or below, and frozen items at 0°F (-18°C) or below.
* Label and Date Items: Clearly label and date all stored food items with the date they were received and the expiration date.
* Separate Storage Areas: Store raw meats, poultry, and seafood on the lowest shelves to prevent cross-contamination with ready-to-eat foods.
* Keep Dry Storage Clean and Organized: Store dry goods in a cool, dry area away from the floor and walls. Keep the area clean and free from pests.

# Step 3: Food Preparation

* Avoid Cross-Contamination: Use separate cutting boards, knives, and utensils for raw and ready-to-eat foods. Clean and sanitize equipment between uses.
* Thawing Safely: Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave, never at room temperature.
* Marinate in the Fridge: Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter, and discard used marinades.
* Cook to Safe Temperatures: Use a food thermometer to ensure foods are cooked to safe internal temperatures:
 - Poultry: 165°F (74°C)
 - Ground meats: 160°F (71°C)
 - Seafood: 145°F (63°C)
 - Beef, pork, lamb, and veal (steaks, chops, roasts): 145°F (63°C) and allow a 3-minute rest time
* Proper Cooling: Cool hot foods quickly by placing them in shallow containers and refrigerating promptly. Use an ice bath or stir foods to speed up the cooling process.

# Step 4: Cleaning and Sanitizing

* Clean as You Go: Keep workstations clean by regularly wiping down surfaces with a sanitizing solution. Clean spills immediately to avoid contamination.
* Sanitize Equipment and Utensils: After cleaning, sanitize all utensils, cutting boards, and equipment that comes into contact with food using approved sanitizers.
* Dishwashing Protocol: Follow proper dishwashing procedures—wash, rinse, and sanitize dishes, pots, pans, and utensils. Ensure dishwashers reach the required sanitizing temperatures.
* Floor and Drain Cleaning: Regularly clean floors and drains to prevent the buildup of food debris and to minimize the risk of pests.

# Step 5: Receiving and Inspecting Deliveries

* Inspect Deliveries Upon Arrival: Check for any signs of damage, spoilage, or contamination. Ensure that frozen and refrigerated goods are at the correct temperatures when they arrive.
* Reject Compromised Products: If any food items do not meet quality or safety standards, reject them and document the issue.
* Proper Storage of Received Goods: Immediately store perishable items at the correct temperatures and dry goods in appropriate storage areas.

# Step 6: Pest Control

* Maintain Cleanliness: Keep all areas clean and free of food debris to reduce the risk of attracting pests.
* Seal Entry Points: Ensure that all doors, windows, and other potential entry points are sealed to prevent pests from entering.
* Use Pest Control Measures: Implement appropriate pest control measures, such as traps and regular professional inspections.

# Step 7: Managing Food Allergies

* Know Common Allergens: Familiarize yourself with common food allergens (e.g., nuts, dairy, gluten, shellfish) and where they are used in the kitchen.
* Prevent Cross-Contact: Use separate utensils, equipment, and storage areas for allergen-free foods. Clean and sanitize work surfaces thoroughly before preparing allergen-free dishes.
* Clear Communication: Clearly label allergen-containing foods and communicate effectively with front-of-house staff to ensure they can inform guests accurately.

# Step 8: Documentation and Record-Keeping

* Temperature Logs: Maintain logs for refrigeration, freezer, and cooked food temperatures. Check and record temperatures regularly.
* Cleaning Schedules: Keep a cleaning and sanitizing schedule that details when and how areas and equipment are cleaned.
* Training Records: Document staff training on food safety practices to ensure everyone is up-to-date on procedures.

Final Note: Maintaining food safety is critical to the health of your customers and the reputation of your restaurant. By following these steps, the Back of House team plays a key role in ensuring the safe preparation, storage, and handling of food. Stay vigilant, follow protocols, and always prioritize safety in your daily operations.