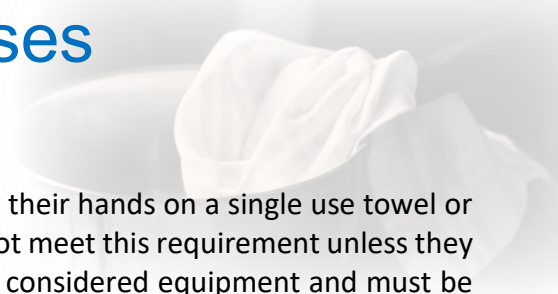


Tea Towels in Food Businesses



The Law

Food handlers must, whenever washing their hands, thoroughly dry their hands on a single use towel or in another way that is not likely to transfer bacteria. Tea towels do not meet this requirement unless they are used once only, and then discarded for laundry. Tea towels are considered equipment and must be maintained in a good state of repair, be clean and adequate for safe and suitable food production.

The Risk

Tea towels and other cloth towels are very absorbent due to their fabric weave. These material fibres aid in the multiplication of bacteria by providing an ideal, moisture rich environment for bacteria to grow and spread. Harmful bacteria not only survive, but increase to high numbers, creating a cross-contamination risk in the kitchen. A used tea towel can spread bacteria to your hands, to food contact surfaces and even directly into food.

Tea Towel 'Handy' Hints

DO NOT USE A TEA TOWEL:	ALTERNATIVE:
To wipe or dry hands	Use single use disposable towels such as paper towel or single use wipes. Coloured single use wipes could be used for designated areas.
To cover food	Use food grade materials such as cling wrap or lids
That is damaged, dirty or wet	Use only good condition, clean and dry tea towels
For different tasks	Treat tea towels as single use only
Tucked into aprons or clothing	Have a container of clean towels ready for single use
To hang them to dry for later use	Have a container for dirty towels ready for laundry

Cleaning Tips

Bleaching of towels/cloths or placing them through the dishwasher has been indicated to be less effective than laundering. Use a hot cycle in the washing machine or boil for 15mins.

Rinsing of towels/cloths or hanging them to dry for later reuse does not destroy bacteria; towels must be adequately washed and allowed to fully dry in the sun or tumble drier.

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