

American Pest

Guide To **Pest-Free** **Cafeteria**



ebook  by American Pest



When it comes to pest problems in schools, whether public or private, cafeterias are one of the most common targets for **nuisance pests** and **rodents** of all shapes and sizes. These areas also provide unique challenges for the staff charged with maintaining them, as pest infestations can lead to severe consequences in the form of food contamination, disease, and other problems.

In this guide, we'll take a look at the unique challenges faced by cafeterias and food prep classrooms in schools, examine some of the most likely culprits that break in and give you all the information you need to keep your lunchrooms pest-free.

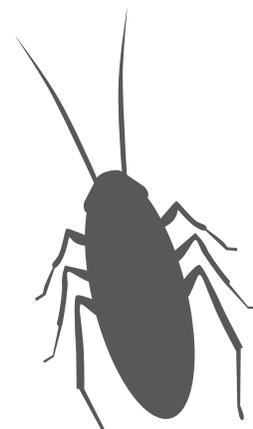


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Why Pests Target Cafeterias

“...the cafeteria in any given school provides numerous opportunities for pest...”

Like humans, insects and animals need **food, water**, and some form of **shelter** in order to survive. Unfortunately, the cafeteria in any given school provides various opportunities for pests to find all three of these resources, making it a common problem area. Staff must deal with these problems in order to prevent food contamination and other problems from arising. And because these resources are so plentiful, it also gives any pest that finds its way inside a strong incentive to stay.

Another factor that contributes to the high potential for a pest infestation in a cafeteria is due to how it operates. Because cafeterias are often open for the entire day due to different lunch schedules, kitchens have to operate on a similar schedule - giving pests plenty of opportunities to roam free over the course of the day.

Operating procedures in the lunchroom can also be a factor. For instance, if a staff member leaves the door open while taking out garbage bags or cracks a window to help the kitchen air out, he could inadvertently be allowing pests to walk right through the door or open window in the process. And of course, failing to clean thoroughly at the end of the day is asking for pests to smell food and find access to the building.



Lunchroom Pest Risks

While cafeterias, concession stands and food prep rooms can come under attack from practically any pest, they tend to attract certain insects and rodents more frequently than others. In a cafeteria setting, common pest invaders include:



Cockroaches: Always on the hunt for food that's been left out or improperly disposed of, cockroaches are a major problem pest because they have the potential to contaminate any food items they

come across. Once cockroaches get into the lunchroom, allergic reactions and diseases can follow, not to mention the disgust of anyone that comes into contact with one.



Ants: Ants are constantly foraging for food to bring back to the colony, sending out scouts in all directions with the single mission of finding resources and reporting back. This means that when

one ant finds its way into the cafeteria more are sure to follow using the pheromone trails that the scout leaves behind. Their small size allows them to squeeze into even the smallest of gaps, making complete prevention all the more difficult.



Flies: Flies can often be found around sinks, drains, and trash cans in kitchens when they're not bothering people eating in the lunchroom. Their flight capabilities give them ample opportunities

to invade through any cracked window or open door. Beyond the annoyance factor, flies are primarily a concern in a cafeteria setting for the diseases they can transmit and for contaminating food items they come across. If they get inside, they can also lay eggs that will hatch into maggots. Students and parents would be outraged to learn how maggots wreak havoc on the insides of anyone who unknowingly ingests them.



Rodents: Rodents are one of the worst pests any lunchroom can face. Mice and rats are hosts to various diseases and parasites, and any food they come across will no longer

be fit for human consumption - assuming any is left to eat. They're also notable for their sheer destructive potential, including their ability to gnaw through walls and floors to get through hard-to-reach areas. And once they've made a home inside the kitchen, the danger level spikes significantly. Biological elements such as their shed fur and droppings provide further avenues for potential disease or allergic reactions.

“...steps
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Tips to Protect Your Cafeterias

While the dining areas on your school grounds are up against some significant threats, there are steps you can take to mitigate your risk and keep safety a priority. If you're looking to protect your cafeteria from harmful pests, instruct kitchen service staff members and faculty managers on some of the following effective prevention methods:



Seal off access to the kitchen and eating area as much as possible. Keep doors and windows shut when not in use and use caulk or steel wool to seal off any small holes you find that could serve as pest entry points.



Prevent garbage from piling up and **ensure dumpsters are stored at least ten feet away** from the exterior of the building. Beyond keeping flies away, this will stop foraging rodents from finding the garbage and immediately making their way into the building.

Keep garbage cans sealed with the lid on whenever not being loaded up. This will help prevent rodents, flies, and roaches from accessing the buffet of food left inside.



Repair any leaky faucets or pipes as quickly as possible. In addition to saving on the water bill, this will deny pests a potential water source thereby giving them less reason to invade.



Clean up messes quickly. Whether in the kitchen or in a multipurpose room, leftover food and spilled drinks are one of the biggest preventable factors that attract pests anywhere. Staff should be instructed to clean the kitchen thoroughly at the end of each shift as well as any tables of leftover food items after students have left to minimize pest risk.



Keep food stored correctly in sealed containers. Beyond preserving the food for longer periods of time, this will help mitigate the amount of scents these food items can give off that serve to attract unwanted company. Seal and refrigerate wherever possible to minimize the potential for rodents to want to visit. When food cannot be refrigerated, keep it away from walls and at least six inches off the floor.



Tips to Protect Your Cafeterias (Continued)

Don't leave dirty dishes out overnight. Keep in mind that even the smallest leftover scraps from a student's meal can be a feast to ants or cockroaches, so leaving dishes unwashed can play a huge role in bringing them into the lunchroom. All dishes should be cleaned and dried prior to staff leaving at the end of their shift.

Inspect food shipments for signs of insect or rodent infestation prior to storage inside the building. The last thing you want to do is give a pest direct access to the kitchen by failing to spot an existing problem. Discard any contaminated food items you find in garbage cans away from the kitchen to keep the contamination from spreading.



1 Clean Dirty Dishes



2 Inspect Shipments



3 Clean & Sanitize



4 Report Warning Signs

Clean and sanitize all food preparation areas All areas should be given a final once-over prior to the end of the shift or class.

Be vigilant and **report any telltale warning signs** of pest infestations (such as droppings, egg casings, strong odors, nests, potential entry points, or live animals or insects) to managers immediately so that further action can be taken.

The Importance of an IPM Plan



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For kitchen staff, part of the problem is that rodents have increasingly become a bigger nuisance with rodent complaints soaring across the D.C. area. Against such a difficult opponent, do-it-yourself methods alone are simply no longer cutting it. That is why it's essential to have an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan in place before pest pressures arise to ensure the best results.

Unfortunately for many kitchens, complete pest protection using DIY methods alone can be a difficult or even insurmountable task given the number of potential pests the building faces and the difficulty of finding and sealing off every potential point of entry. Having an IPM Plan in place from a certified pest control company is the best solution to address any and all pest concerns kitchen staff could face while creating an avenue to address any problems immediately as they arise.

When you contact a pest control company to put an IPM Plan in place, they'll be able to help you:

- Identify any pest threats that spring up across school grounds
- Develop a strategy to eliminate any invasive pests you might be facing
- Monitor issues to gauge the effectiveness of current prevention methods
- Track and evaluate the effectiveness of treatments

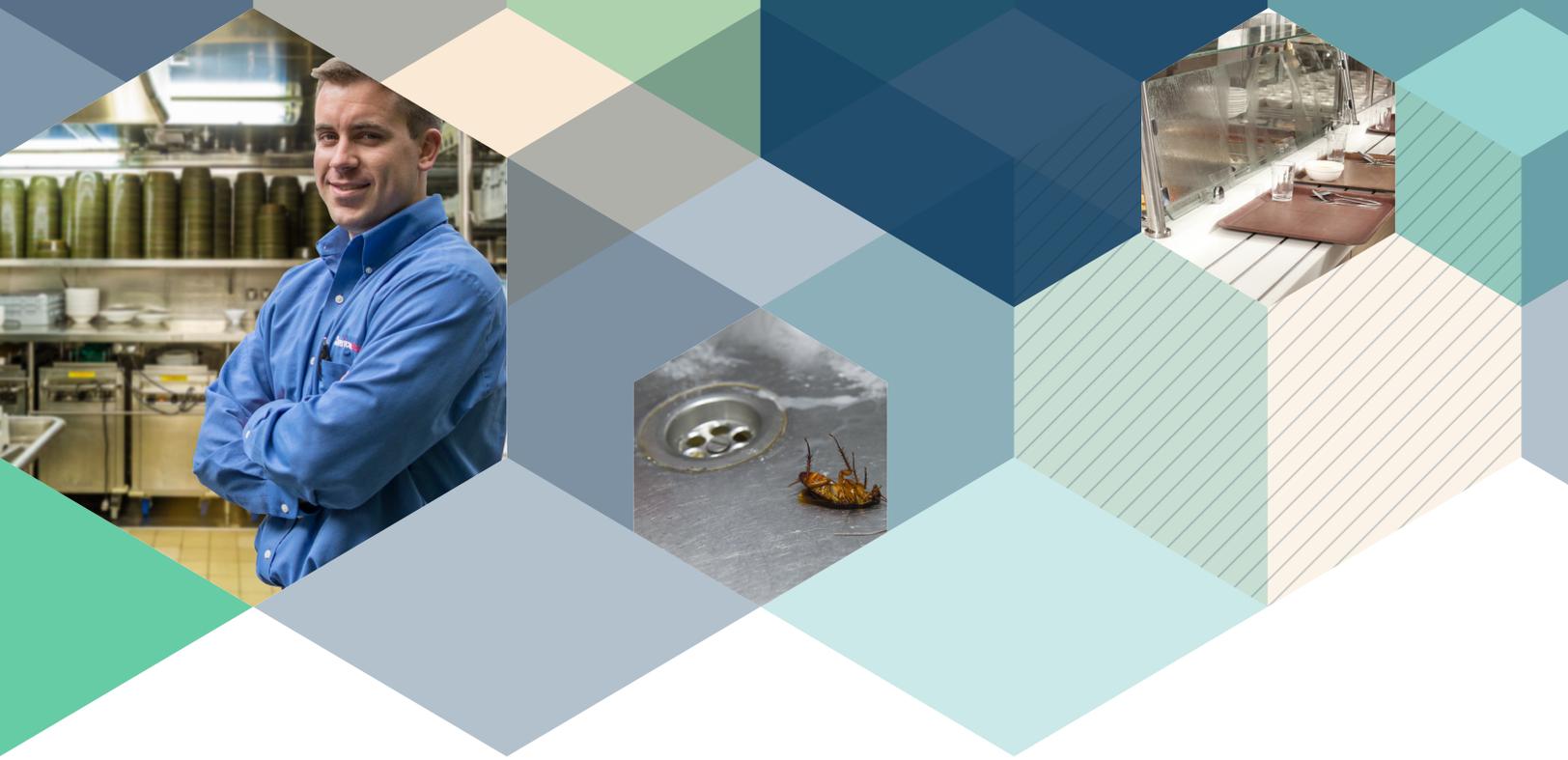


Why Schools Turn to American Pest for Complete Pest Protection

If you're looking to stop a pest infestation in your dining area and keep yourself protected for the future, look no further than American Pest for comprehensive pest protection.

American Pest has been protecting kitchens, dining rooms, and other facilities across Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. from cockroaches, ants, flies, rodents, and all sorts of other pests for almost a century. With our experienced technicians and access to the latest pest elimination technology at our disposal, we can eliminate any pest problem you may be facing. Contact us today to find out more about how an Integrated Pest Management Plan through American Pest can keep your school pest-free.





Call Us Today for a Free Inspection and Consultation.

(855) 212-3677

American Pest is a modern pest control company with a team of more than 160 pest prevention experts. We credit our longstanding tradition of excellence to our people, who provide quality pest control solutions to over 12,000 homes and businesses and millions of square feet of federal offices and institutions throughout Washington D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia.



American Pest
Corporate Headquarters
11820 West Market Place
Fulton, Maryland 20759
www.americanpest.net

info@americanpest.net
(855) 212-3677