

# New CA Law Forces Restaurant Workers to Wear Gloves

Thursday, January 9, 2014, by [Hillary Dixler](#)



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A new California law has banned chefs from touching "**ready-to-eat**" food with their bare hands. As [Eater LA previously reported](#), an addendum added to the California Retail Food Code which began on January 1 mandates that chefs **wear gloves or use utensils** when touching any foods that are not going to be "thoroughly cooked" or reheated before being served. [The California Restaurant Association has a handy breakdown](#) of the new rule, noting that the changes applies to handling things like breads, salads, and sushi.

The rule also impacts plating. Chefs will need to wear gloves or use utensils when **touching garnishes** and any foods that are already cooked. [Nation's Restaurant News reports that](#) the rule change is still in "a soft rollout" for the next six months, with health officials responding to concerns that restaurants would be "caught unaware of the new rules." The California Department of Public Health and the California Conference of Directors of Environmental Health will be noting violations as a warning on inspection reports during this time period.

The code changes are fairly sweeping, but restaurants are welcome to **apply for an exemption**. It's unclear what exactly qualifies a restaurant for exemption — and it seems to be at the DOH's discretion — but exempt restaurants must "not serv[e] a highly susceptible population." Restaurants will have to apply for exemption with a written health plan and prove that employees are properly trained in hand-washing and preventing cross-contamination. Similarly, the new rule explains that gloves must also be changed often to prevent cross-contamination and hands must still be regularly

washed.

It remains to be seen how the changes will play with California chefs. Back in 2012 when Oregon was considering similar legislation, [Eater talked with several Oregon chefs](#) who said **being forced to wear gloves can be "dangerous,"** environmentally unfriendly, and can "make things slower" in the kitchen. They also pointed out that using gloves doesn't necessarily promote good kitchen hygiene. Incidentally, Oregon ultimately [did not adopt](#) a glove mandate.