

Local rcles



# ***“Improving Food Quality in Railways”***

Collective inputs from over 70,000 Citizens in circle

**“Make Railways Better”**

***(Current State, Issues, Root Causes and Proposed Solutions)***

***January 10, 2015***



## Improving Food Quality in Railways

### **Executive Summary**

An important aspect of the train travel is the food served in it. Lately, a lot of complaints have been coming up regarding the quality of food and pantry in the trains. The 70,000+ strong “Making Railways Better” online community has come together to collectively identify the key issues, root causes and solutions for Improving Food Quality in Indian Railways and the community expects that Indian Railways will soon work towards implementing the identified solutions.

### **Issues Identified:**

1. Oil used in food is smelly
2. Pantry car is in a very unhygienic condition
3. There are many insects running around in the pantry car
4. Food is served cold
5. Food trays are kept on the floor
6. Many times food boxes are kept outside toilets
7. Chapatis are under-cooked
8. Tea bags are sub-standard
9. Water bottles are served with broken seals
10. Presentation is bad – trays are wet and dirty
11. Pantry boys don't wear a uniform or gloves
12. Pantry boys take out spoons and tea bags from pockets of their dirty uniform
13. Trains like Shatabdi and Rajdhani also serve sub-quality food
14. Utensils used are dirty
15. No proper place for food storage.
16. No way to provide feedback on food

### **Root Causes Identified:**

1. Catering services are outsourced, system for quality check has serious gaps
2. Contracts are usually taken by small time vendors/ businessmen who want to make maximum money during contract period
3. Food is prepared and served by people with little knowledge of hygiene/service
4. Lack of proper storage facilities the pantry car
5. No background checks while choosing vendors
6. No sense of responsibility - they use substandard food ingredients to save more & more money



7. There is a corrupt nexus between the vendors and the officials'
8. Mistakes of the food contractors and pantry boys are overlooked
9. Pantry boys fill the bottles with tap water and make money on them
10. Contractors not fined in case they don't meet the required standards
11. No supervisor appointed to oversee the pantry operations
12. Pantry boys not educated on self -hygiene
13. Visitor entry allowed via pantry to different coaches – brings more dirt then revenue
14. Insufficient facilities to preserve huge quantity foods

### **Solutions Identified:**

1. Tough quality checks should be put in place for selecting food vendors
2. Contracts should be given to big and established vendors
3. Clear charter, quality and service metrics to be given to catering vendors
4. Food contracts should be reviewed every quarter to keep vendors on toes
5. High penalty should be imposed on defaulting/non performing contractors
6. Standard dispensing machine should be installed for items like milk, cornflakes, coffee, tea, pre made snacks, etc.
7. Passengers should be able to pre-order from a fixed menu
8. Menu cards and price list is to be displayed in the coaches
9. Food contractor's name and contact number, along with the concerned IRCTC supervisor's name and contact number are to be displayed in each bogie
10. The serving boys should necessarily wear a clean uniform and identity cards
11. Pantry boys should be trained on maintaining hygiene and cleanliness
12. CCTV should be installed in the pantry cars
13. Instead of carrying trays in hand, the waiters should be provided with trolleys
14. The unauthorised vendors should not be allowed to enter the platforms
15. Regular surprise quality checks of the pantry should be done by senior officials
16. An effective online/mobile based citizen feedback mechanism should be set up
17. Citizens should be able to rate Food and Service via the Make Railways Better circle
18. Railway officer must take action on any complaint within specified period of time
19. Pantry coach should be redesigned with modern facilities and amenities
20. Engaging Local Self Help Group of Railway Travellers to be a feet on the ground and a secondary checkpoint can improve the situation
21. Regular feedback should be taken from passengers like the local circles
22. IRCTC should consider consulting with a Food Technological Research Institute for comprehensive advice on food quality, food safety and nutrition



## Food Quality in Railways – A few citizen posts and comments:

1. The quality of food in trains is below standard but prices are high and it is just like cheating the passengers. This poor food quality spoiling the mood of passengers and the discomforts of coaches like cockroaches etc., delays of trains further accelerating – **Ramakrishnan Sridhar**
2. Best thing is to do like airlines, bring in prepared food from five star catering services and heat up in the pantry and serve. no need to cook in the pantry and make mess out of it – **Pravesh Kumar**
3. The same food items served by the pantry cars are available on the platform in the exact stations where the dinner/lunch is served and the quality of the food i.e. it is hotter and tastier if we buy it from the vendor on the platform. Railway authorities could subsidise these vendors and serve the travellers with better food and run the pantry car for only beverages and snacks. Another most important thing sold by the pantry car is WATER. There is no quality control at all. Please focus on this area to avoid water borne disease – **Uma Krishnan**
4. The food contractors should be instructed to have their place of cooking pest free & certificates should be obtained for doing periodical pest control measures – **Taliyur Ramaswamy**
5. Pantry staff collects money whatever they want, money change also became big issue and need to provide bill is necessary – **Easwar A**
6. unauthorized vendors should be strictly banned they just block the passages and corridors of the coaches no guarantee about the quality of food they provide – **Raghu Jain**
7. the feedback or complaints should not be given to the rly officers but it should be manned by feedback system or by sms to the relevant authority ( not related to the vendor) or else the complaint will NOT be communicated at all that defeats the entire effort to improve the system – **Venkatesh Srinivasan**
8. First of all the contracts should not involve money. I heard the Pantry people were telling how much government officials take to give the contract. If they pay that much, they will try to recover it from our pocket. That's why Rs 50 food is not even worth Rs. 10 – **Pravin Singh**
9. Railways should have their own food inspectorate that regularly checks various food stations in the trains and on the platform - quality of raw material, the storage conditions, hygiene and health of cooking and serving staff, quality of prepared food, quality of food at the point of service - get the samples checked in the food laboratories set up by railways for any adulteration or spurious products and take both penal and legal action against the defaulters. – **Virendra Goel**
10. Quality of food served in the trains is really bad. Cleanliness and hygiene is also not up to the mark. I would put in some points regarding this. The standard cost of a



chicken meal in train is around Rs. 120. It is expected that in this amount atleast the quantity and quality and obviously taste should be compensating. But sadly, I haven't eaten a tasty meal on train for years. Even the food quality on the NDLS-SDAH Kolkata Rajdhani on which I travel often is just average. The quantity too isn't enough I think. As far as I am concerned, the first important thing necessary is to ensure that the food served in trains be prepared under supervision. Secondly, the hygiene in the pantry cars needs to be maintained. The cleanliness of the pantry people should also be addressed. I think if they taste the food themselves they would surely quit cooking. I mean how can professional cooks prepare such forcibly edible meals? – **Ratnakirti Roy**

11. Important stations--where food quality is good--we should be able to place orders from kiosks kept in train -to be served hot...their menus to be enabled – **Mohan Srinivasan**
12. So far to analyse & summarize various key points to improve food quality in Railway. all praise. However, it is all theory, more difficult task is ahead in implementing since mind set of our people where corruption & corrupt practices in blood, please note, in our country, rules are made later but how to break them are thought first. My all praise to think tank but caution to implement – **Nand Lal Pamnani**
13. Transparency should be there in giving contracts, with strict rules. Contractors should be penalized and cancel their contracts in case of any violation. Vendors in pantry are cheating the passengers ,which the authorities very well know – **Mani Maran**
14. I think it will be better to give a feedback along with the bill i mean the customer can be provided with a feedback form while paying the bill for individual meal and that should be reviewed by the managing committee and based on the feedback the contractors should be evaluated – **Kuldeep Singh**
15. Clean drinking water hot and cold must be provided with a standard water dispensing machine through a standard Aquaguard filter unit in each coach – **Yashwant Singh**
16. This is the section where the Indian railway needs a lot of improvement. Of late the quality of food supplied in stations and trains is so bad that I stopped consuming food during journeys. The cost of the food items is also very high. Even Shatabdi and Rajadhani express trains fare no better. it will be better if the catering is entrusted to non-profit oriented organisations – **Vasanta Madhava**