

Ty Harrison  
*What's Really on the Menu?*

The reason I chose to do this project was because I noticed a family member washing their hands every time after they ordered from a menu. I began to wonder just how much bacteria growth was on menus. I interviewed restaurant owners or managers to learn about their cleaning protocols for the menus and to get permission to test their menus for bacteria. I explained that I would not share the information learned from the experiment publicly. I took one menu home with me to test the cleaning products on. Three menus in each restaurant were swabbed and then marked with a colored label and re-tested a week later to see how much the bacteria changed. To test the cleaning products, I gathered a control sample of the menus and then used three different cleaning products to see which one would get rid of most of the bacteria. After my bacteria grew out in the local hospital lab, the laboratory director taught me how to count colonies and types of bacteria. It was definitely possible to see which restaurants had cleaner menus than others. My results from the cleaning products test were not what I expected. After my project is done I plan on visiting the restaurants and sharing my findings with them. Hopefully we can make all future dining experiences in restaurants much cleaner.