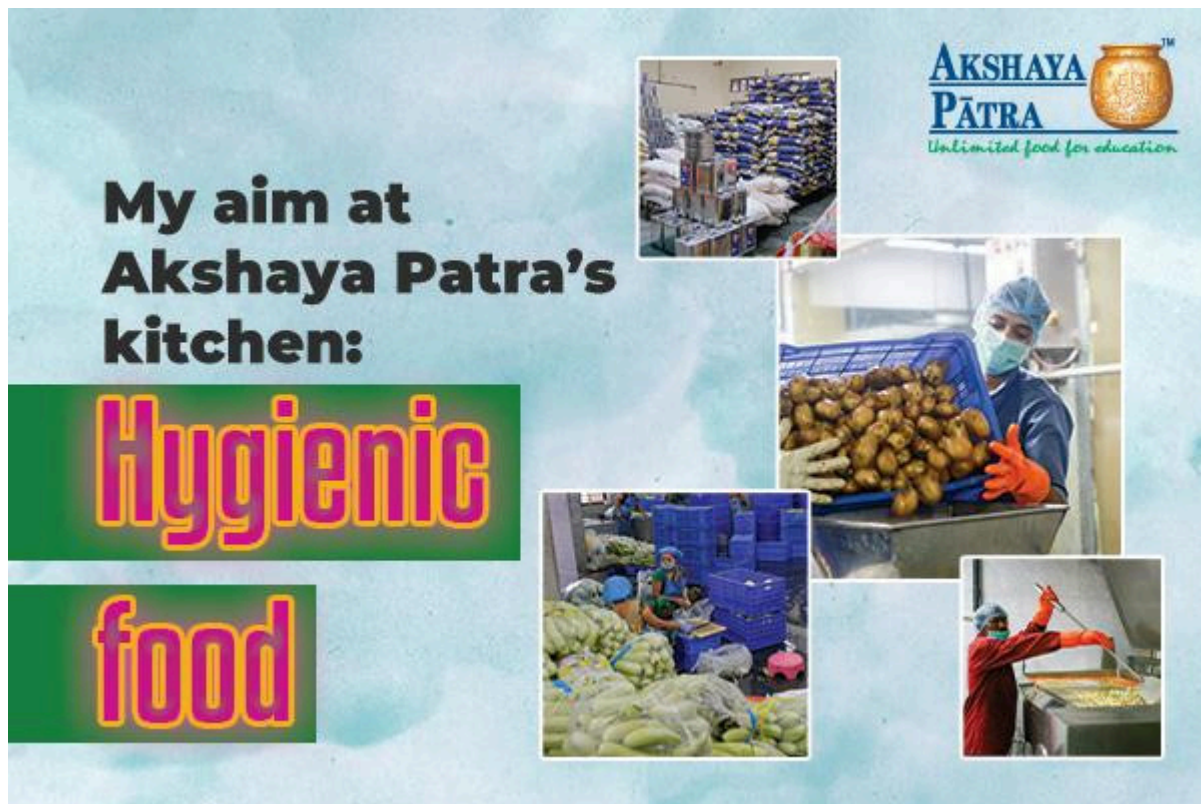




# What Does It Take To Deliver A Hygienic Midday Meal



I snoozed my alarm.

I was still so sleepy and tired.

It was probably the medicines that showed its effect on my body. I was still recovering from the last week's fall at home.

Today is the first day I went after this incident.

So I decided to wake up even before the next alarm went off.

There was a sharp shooting pain in my left leg. I found it difficult to move from one place to another; walking to the bathroom took me a good 5 minutes. I was worried about how I will perform in the kitchen today.

I got dressed up and was ready to leave home by 4.30 in the morning. I do not fear contracting the virus, I am not worried because my company – The Akshaya Patra Foundation ensured my safety by arranging vaccination for all its employees.

I reached the kitchen premise.

And my drill began.

**I stood in line to get my temperature checked.**

One of my colleagues had a slightly higher temperature than what was accepted, so he was asked to go back home.

It was my turn; the security guy checked my temperature. He asked me how I was doing. I didn't know even the security guy knew about the accident.

## **I moved ahead to sanitise my hand.**

Everyone was smiling and asking about me, I felt like a celebrity!

I tied my hair into a bun and put on the headgear. We all were asked to do this every day without fail because this was a **midday meal NGO**, and hygiene is of utmost priority here. Whether employees work in a **centralised kitchen** or a decentralised kitchen, headgear, masks and gloves are compulsory. After I was geared up with the head cap, I went ahead to wash my hands.

As I was washing my hands with soap and humming a song, Thaayamma joined me. I missed her! She reminds me of my deceased aunt.

Thaayamma: Yenamma Sridevi! How are you feeling now?

Me: I am fine akka. I just find it difficult to walk and sit these days.

Thaayamma: Oh is it? Maybe we can talk to the Supervisor to give you a chair for a few days.

Me: Is that possible? It's never happened before.

Thaayamma: Don't worry! Ours is a **centralised kitchen**, I am sure we can find a chair for you to work on.

She went out of her way to take permission from the Supervisor and help me sit on a chair for me to work on.

I love my job here at Akshaya Patra! Every individual is respected and taken care of.

Everyone was so welcoming; like I had come back from a long weekend. It makes me so happy to come here every single day.

**I stretched my hands as I was going to begin work after a long gap of 4 days. My task for today was cutting Mangaluru cucumbers, while Thaayamma was assigned carrots, Sarita with drumsticks and the**

**rest beans, onions and tomatoes. The menu for today was Krishnamruth sambar with steamed rice.**

The cook was shouting around asking all of us to hurry up, else Akshaya Patra – [a midday meal NGO](#) would be late to serve midday meals to children. As the rice was being steamed and the supervisor was checking on the seasoning ingredients, we had visitors in the kitchen. I heard from others that they had contributed earlier, and wanted to **donate online** this year too, but wanted to check on the quality and hygiene of the [centralised kitchen](#). I glanced around the room, the visitor was a woman.

The visitor was not wearing a head cap. We were not so worried but could not deny the fact that even a strand of hair in the kitchen would raise a red flag. The supervisor came forward and politely handed over the head cap to her which she obliged.

It was a relief!

**One helper was assigned to wash the vegetables in flowing water, twice. He then moved all the cleaned and washed chopping boards, knives and utensils to all of us.**

**Can you imagine washing hundreds of kilos of rice, dals and other legumes every day?**

For cooking this sambar for around 5000 primary children coming from poor sections of society, we use close to 115kgs of different types of dals. As I was lost in doing my work in a rhythmic manner along with others, we cut close to 150kgs of vegetables; I forgot about my pain. After almost an hour of cutting and chopping, we all were finally done for the day.

It was almost 5.45 in the morning. I could smell the dals cooking in the cauldrons. I am glad that I am a part of this organisation that feeds children who otherwise do not get to eat anything nutritious or wholesome in one day. I hope I get the strength to come to this kitchen every day, no matter what situation I am in or what virus hits society.

I will continue working for the betterment of children!

**Conclusion**

This is just a glimpse of what Sridevi's day in the kitchen is; this goes on every single day. Employees of [Akshaya Patra](#) work tirelessly, day after another to ensure that young children are fed with hot and nutritious meals. **Donate online** to support this midday meal NGO that feeds 1.8 million children every day.