

# German Cockroaches in Restaurants

*Anna Getchell, Operations Process Manager, McCloud Services*

## GERMAN COCKROACHES – THE INTROVERTS

Pests, like people, have personalities based upon their behavior. Just like in the human world, the pest world is made up of all “types.” Imagine you’re at a party. There are the loud “in-your-face” extroverts that talk to anyone. They don’t have much of a filter, they’re always up in your business, can’t take a hint that they’re being too loud. Those are the flies. On the other side of the pest personality spectrum, we have the German cockroaches. These are the introverts. They’re the ones that cling to the wall at a party, preferring to stay out of the spotlight and in the dark. They don’t want to be noticed like their loud fly counterparts. They want to stay cozied up against the wall where they feel safe and secure.



German cockroaches are cryptobiotic, which means they prefer to stay hidden. In addition, they really prefer to have pressure on both sides of their body. A tight crevice gives them a feeling of security they just can’t obtain out in the open. On top of all these socially inept behaviors, they prefer darkness. The only reason they even came to the party is because it was in the dark.

### CHALLENGES FOR RESTAURANTS

To the restaurant manager, this spells trouble. A German cockroach population will make their nest in a sheltered, dark location. They’re not brash like flies, who will infest drains in the middle of the room with no discretion. No, German cockroaches actively avoid the spotlight, making their discovery a lot more challenging than the flies... until the population becomes so large that the nest cannot hold them.

Like even the most introverted wallflowers, the German cockroaches will leave their nest for food. Typically, the adult male will leave the nest and bring food back to the females and juveniles (nymphs). They don’t want to travel too far from the nest as any period of exposure is risky to them and they feel unsafe. So, their nests will often be approximately 12 feet from a food source. This means that preferred food sources may be just as hidden as the cockroaches themselves. If a German cockroach had to choose between food on a table or food underneath the refrigerator, they’ll go for the food underneath the refrigerator. That food is less risky, the chances of them being seen there are lower than if they take head towards the food on the table. Eventually, populations may get so large that the table food will be worth the risk, but those infestations are going to grow off of the hidden food, the forgotten crumbs and wrappers that are in dark hidden spaces where cockroaches prefer to dwell.

Cockroaches will arrive from a number of sources: vendors, packaging, employees, customers, etc. The key is to make it an inhospitable environment for them. If we can remove the food source, they can’t take hold and infest. When your Pest Management Professional looks for German cockroaches, they will rarely find them while strolling the aisles of your kitchen or dining room. Since cockroaches hate being out in the open, we won’t usually find them there (unless the infestation is large).

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Instead, we'll find them in the hard to reach areas – under equipment, behind equipment, in rarely used cabinets and drawers, in built up debris – these are the places cockroaches want to be. They feel safe here. It's dark, hidden, out of the way, and has lots of cracks to provide pressure on both sides of the body. The top of the breasting table may not be an ideal place for cockroach security, but underneath that table, in the lip of the table or the hollow legs where food has built up, now that's a cockroach sanctuary.

Since German cockroaches are going to prefer food that is low risk, they're going to go for the food that is as hidden as they are. For this reason, thorough sanitation is the key to preventing German cockroach infestations. It's not good enough to just clean that breasting table surface, we've got to clean all of its parts. It's not enough to mop the floor, we need to move the fridge and oven and clean underneath the equipment, as well. A rule of thumb is that if it's hard to clean, it probably isn't cleaned. These are the places cockroaches will party.

## **TIPS FOR PREVENTING GERMAN COCKROACH INFESTATIONS**

There are many things a restaurant manager can do to make their restaurant a party that a German cockroach would decline an invitation to:

1. Develop (*and follow*) a sanitation schedule: Every section of the building should be regularly cleaned, with food prep and storage areas given extra attention. Develop a schedule and assign responsibilities so that each area and piece of equipment is systematically cleaned.
2. Take things apart when cleaning, food debris builds up in the inaccessible cracks.
3. Move the equipment when cleaning so you can get underneath it.
4. Use degreaser and cleaning agents that remove the food buildup cockroaches prefer.
5. Minimize the number of cracks/crevices that are available for cockroaches to hide in by sealing them up.
6. Inspect deliveries, often our infestations begin with hitchhiking cockroaches.
7. Use a reputable Pest Management Professional that monitors and inspects for cockroaches.
8. Train your employees to report cockroach sightings. Educate them on the correlation between sanitation and cockroaches – the cleaner the restaurant, the less likely a cockroach population will develop.

### **About the Author**

*Anna Getchell is operations process manager at McCloud Services. She is a member of the Entomological Society of America and is certified in HACCP and ServSafe. Getchell holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Oregon and a master's degree in grain science from Kansas State University.*

### **About McCloud Services**

*Founded in 1904, McCloud Services, based in South Elgin, Ill., is the leader in food protection services throughout the chain of custody – from grain elevator to grocery store. McCloud Services is known for its integrated approach to pest management, specifically designed for the food supply chain of custody. Serving the largest food-related brands in the U.S. McCloud Services has locations in 11 states with nine service centers.*

*McCloud Services is a founding member and shareholder in Copesan, an alliance of premier pest management companies with locations throughout North America. Headquartered in South Elgin, Illinois, McCloud Services has locations in Illinois as well as throughout Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, Ohio and Wisconsin.*

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