



FAQs: Safe Quality Food (SQF) Certification and Food Safety

Q: What does SQF stand for and what is the program for?

A: SQF stands for Safe Quality Food. It is a rigorous and credible food safety and quality auditing program through [SQFI](#) (Safe Quality Food Institute) that is recognized by retailers, brand owners, and food service providers world-wide. SQF utilizes science-based, proven principles in order to consistently apply standards of food safety and quality on a global level. Companies with SQF certification are going the extra mile to instill a high degree of trust in their products and procedures.

Q: Are there different types of SQF certifications?

A: Yes, there are three different SQF certification tiers – Instinct has the highest possible certification: SQF Food Safety and Quality.

The three types of certification are as follows [as stated by SQFI](#):

- [SQF Safety Fundamentals](#): Mainly for low-risk products; this program incorporates fundamental food safety controls.
- [SQF Food Safety](#): The backbone of the food safety system benchmarked by GFSI (Global Food Safety Initiative) that includes HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) program requirements, but also contain codes, accepted as an international standard of excellence, that go above and beyond the scope of HACCP.
- [SQF Quality](#): A comprehensive implementation of risk-based quality management systems. This certification can be achieved only upon completion of SQF Food Safety certification. Very few manufacturers pursue this high level of certification.

Q: Why is SQF certification important?

A: Companies with SQF certification are demonstrating that they go above and beyond to ensure the safest, highest quality facilities and products. The tiered certification process is rigorous and a highly credible indicator of a company's dedication to safety, quality, and transparency.

At Instinct, we've always been dedicated to ensuring our pet foods manufactured at company-owned raw facilities in Lincoln, Nebraska are as safe as possible. Because we continually strive to raise the bar in pet food, we sought to attain SQF certification in both Food Safety and Quality to inspire utmost confidence in our recipes. Instinct is the ONLY raw pet food company in North America to achieve an "Excellent" SQF Food Safety rating and an SQF Quality certification.

Q: Why did Instinct pursue SQF certification in Food Safety and Quality?

To go the extra mile! SQF Quality certification is a one step above SQF Food Safety certification and can be achieved only upon passing the SQF Food Safety certification. In other words, SQF Quality certification captures all elements of SQF Food Safety, taking the process a step further, ensuring all fundamentals of food quality are applied.

Q: Are these credentials unique or do most pet food brands have them?

A: An SQF Quality certification is unique among pet food manufacturers. Not many pet food manufacturers receive the SQF Quality certification – this is a more rigorous and prestigious certification than the SQF Food Safety certification alone.



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Q: Are all Instinct recipes now SQF certified?

A: Any Instinct recipe that is made in our company-owned Lincoln, Nebraska facilities is SQF certified. This includes all of our frozen raw recipes and freeze-dried raw recipes.

Q: I’ve seen some companies talk about HACCP certification – how is SQF different from that?

A: The HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) concept was first developed in the 1960s by the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), working with Pillsbury, to ensure pathogen-free food that had extensive shelf-life properties for space travel and has been adopted by food industry for decades.

Both SQF Food Safety and HACCP focus on food safety aspects and have the common goal of achieving food safety in food manufacturing. SQF Food Safety codes include HACCP program requirements, but they also contain codes, accepted as an international standard of excellence, that go above and beyond the scope of HACCP.

Due to its stricter requirements, SQF certification is less commonly sought out by food manufacturers. On the other hand, HACCP has been implemented across America, Europe, Asia and Australasia making it one of the largest food safety standards on the planet.

Q: Can you provide more specifics about what maintaining these SQF certifications entails?

A: The SQF codes require comprehensive management system processes to manage food safety issues throughout the organization and go above and beyond controlling hazards through HACCP and Good Manufacturing Programs. This includes: food safety and quality policy, management commitment, effective communication of food safety issues, emergency preparedness, resource management, verification, validation, traceability, control of nonconformity, internal audits, corrective and preventive actions, continuous improvement, key performance indicators, document control, food defense, economic adulteration (food fraud), sanitation, pest control, environmental monitoring, supplier approval and performance monitoring, recall management, complaint handling, personnel training, preventive maintenance, change management, calibration and control of measuring and monitoring devices, ingredient and product specifications, ingredient and product testing, shelf-life study, equipment sanitary design, foreign material control, regulatory compliance, statistical process control, storage and distribution control, waste control, water quality, and more!

Q: Is Instinct in compliance to FDA’s Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)?

A: Yes, we uphold the strict standards set by the FDA FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act), a federally mandated set of food safety regulations. Complying to FSMA means that we hold our manufacturing food safety standards the same as for human food facilities.

Q: Are Instinct Raw Pet Food products safer than raw pet food from other brands?

A: Our company-owned manufacturing facilities in Lincoln, Nebraska hold unique certifications that demonstrate our deep commitment to safety and quality. We also take safety steps during our raw pet food manufacturing process that not all raw pet food brands do.



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Another thing that sets Instinct raw food apart from other raw is our safety steps; during our manufacturing process, we apply a state of the art, non-thermal technology called High Pressure Processing (HPP) or Cold Pressure Processing to effectively destroy pathogens in the raw food. Unlike traditional heat processing, HPP uses cold water and intense pressure so the characteristics of the fresh product are retained, and the nutritional and functional properties of the product are not altered during the process. Additionally, we add probiotics to all of our raw chicken recipes prior to HPP as an extra layer of safety against Salmonella. Finally, we test our raw recipes multiple times for safety before it’s sold.