

Food Safety Update



This publication will keep operators of food service establishments up to date on food safety, regulations and foodborne illness. Content is generated as a collaboration between Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health.

Health Protection | *Ensuring Healthy People and Healthy Environments*

2020

FOODSAFE Updates

FOODSAFE growth in BC and newest program, ProcessSafe

FOODSAFE is a suite of food safety training courses developed to support safe food handling practices in the food service and food processing industries and in farmer's markets. Since its creation in 1986, over a million people have taken one or more of our courses in British Columbia. More than 40,000 people in BC and 12,000 people outside of BC are taught FOODSAFE Level 1 each year.



Our logos were recently updated to acknowledge that FOODSAFE programs are developed by the Province of British Columbia and are the collaborative effort of many stakeholders from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training, Ministry of Health, BC Centre for Disease Control, Regional Health Authorities and First Nations Health Authority, Open School BC, Queen's Printers and the FOODSAFE Secretariat.

☑ TAKE A COURSE WITH US!

Course	In-person	Online	Distance
FOODSAFE Level 1	☑	☑	☑
FOODSAFE Level 1 Refresher		☑	
FOODSAFE Level 2	☑	☑	
MarketSafe	☑	☑	
ProcessSafe		☑	

Our newest program, ProcessSafe, will go live in spring 2020. It has been developed to provide entry-level workers at small and micro-food processing operations with an understanding of safe food practices in a food processing context.

To find out more about our programs, review promotional videos, download a pamphlet or register for a course, visit www.foodsafe.ca ■

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Please share this Food Update with your staff

Can kombucha be alcoholic?

Is it a health concern?

Over the summer 2019, the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) in collaboration with Regional Health Authorities, the BC Institute of Technology (BCIT) and the University of BC (UBC) surveyed kombucha products for the presence of alcohol. Kombucha is a slightly sweetened fermented tea beverage; some products may contain low levels of alcohol. In BC, beverages >1% alcohol by volume (ABV) are considered alcoholic. Regulations require sale and distribution in approved and licensed stores.

What did we find?

Over 650 samples from 53 different kombucha producers were assessed. The majority of samples were purchased directly from retail stores, restaurants and other food premises. Nearly 60% of the producers sampled had one or more kombucha samples with detectable alcohol over the regulatory limit. The highest level of alcohol was found in a restaurant sample of kombucha— with an ABV of 3.6%. Many other samples collected directly from the processor were also above an ABV of 1%.

Is this a health concern?

Yes, for pregnant women who want to avoid all alcohol to protect their babies and small toddlers who can become ill after consuming small amounts of alcoholic fluid. For a 10kg child, if kombucha contained 2.5% ABV, less than one cup (~175mL) would provide enough of a dose to warrant monitoring the child in hospital. Other adults may also want to avoid alcohol for personal, health, occupational or religious beliefs.



Photo: Kombucha tea samples under refrigeration at the BCCDC.

BCCDC is working with Health Canada, the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch (LCRB) and Regional Health Authorities to educate kombucha producers about the hazard of alcohol in their product and to educate consumers that some kombucha brands may contain small amounts of alcohol. ■

Good practices for storing wiping cloths

How to keep your cloths clean

Food preparation surfaces such as cutting boards are commonly cleaned using a wiping cloth. However, when these cloths become dirty, harmful bacteria can grow in them which can then be spread to food contact surfaces and to food.

To prevent bacteria from growing on these cloths they should be stored in a solution prepared using an approved sanitizer such as bleach. The bleach solution should be maintained at a concentration of 100 – 200 ppm and it should be checked regularly using chlorine test strips.

It's a good idea to rinse food debris off of the cloths before placing them in the sanitizing solution as dirty wiping cloths can lessen the effectiveness of the sanitizer. It is also important to change the solution as it becomes visibly dirty or the sanitizer will no longer be effective.

Follow these tips to make sure your wiping cloths are always stored correctly:

- Wash cloths routinely between uses.
- Store wiping cloths in a sanitizing solution when not in use.

- Make sure the sanitizing solution is clean. The water should be clear and not cloudy.
- Change the solution if the water is dirty.
- Make sure the sanitizing solution is at the proper concentration. This will vary depending on the type of sanitizer used in your premises. ■



Cell phone use in the kitchen

Is your phone actually clean?

Mobile phones or “cell phones” may be used in food establishments by employees for personal use or for company operations such as completing transactions.

Cell phones may be contaminated with bacteria and other substances depending on user’s personal hygiene and storage habits. Due to this reason, it is recommended that the use of cell phones be avoided while handling or processing foods whether in a food establishment or at home.

There are several possible sources of contamination in a food establishment which include but are not limited to raw meats, money, garbage, soiled utensils and hands. Every time a food handler comes in contact with a cell phone and then touches food, the risk of cross contamination increases. With every increased risk there is a potential of a food-borne illness.

You can help lower the chances of contaminating food by not using a cell phone when preparing food.



Always follow these simple tips:

- Keep cell phones in a designated area away from food storage and food preparation areas.
- Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces that may come into contact with a cell phone.
- Wash hands immediately after touching a cell phone. Use liquid soap and scrub for at least 20-30 seconds. Thorough hand washing is important after handling a cell phone, money or raw foods and before handling food. ■

Bug spotlight: Norovirus

What is Norovirus?

Noroviruses are a group of viruses that can cause severe vomiting and/or diarrhea as well as nausea, stomach pain, chills and fever. Symptoms can start within 12 to 48 hours after infection with the virus and can last for 1 to 3 days.

Noroviruses are easily spread and are one of the most common causes of illness outbreak within a restaurant.

How is it spread so easily?

- Infected people release large numbers of norovirus in their vomit or stool.
- It only takes very few virus particles to become infected.
- Vomiting releases virus particles into the air which can infect other people or contaminate nearby surfaces or food.
- Norovirus survives for a long time on surfaces such as countertops and sink taps and can be picked up on people’s hands.
- Illness can occur when virus particles on your hands touch your mouth.



- Illness can occur after consuming contaminated food or food handled by an infected person.

How to reduce the risk of Norovirus in your premises:

- Wash hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water (i.e. scrub all parts of hands with lots of soapsuds and warm water for 20 seconds).
- Avoid touching ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.
- Staff who are ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea should not be working. Staff must remain off work for a period of time after their last bout of vomiting and/or diarrhea. Contact your local Environmental Health Officer to find out how long.
- If anyone vomits or has diarrhea, block off the area and clean up immediately using detergent and water. Then disinfect all hard surfaces with a 1000 ppm bleach solution (4 teaspoons bleach to 1 litre of water). Apply the bleach solution and allow it to air dry.
- Clean and sanitize the kitchen area thoroughly during a norovirus outbreak. Bleach and accelerated hydrogen peroxide are 2 sanitizers that are effective against norovirus. ■

Use of disposable gloves in food premises

Using gloves properly in the workplace

Disposable gloves may be used by food handlers to lower the chances of bare hand contact with food. Wearing gloves helps to prevent the spread of disease causing germs which may cause food poisoning.



However many food handlers are surprised to hear that even if they wear disposable gloves, they are required to properly and thoroughly wash their hands! Gloves can pick up bacteria just like your hands if they are not used properly, leading to food contamination.

Always follow these tips if you wear disposable gloves in your food premises:

- Wash your hands thoroughly before putting on a new pair of gloves or after removing the used gloves.
- Change your gloves frequently, especially after handling raw meats, changing work tasks and

if the gloves are leaking or torn.

- Use disposable gloves only once. Throw them out as soon as they become contaminated.
- Do not use latex gloves. Latex is a common allergen which can put staff and customers at risk of an allergic reaction.
- Wear gloves if you handle food and have cuts, sores or rashes on your hands.

Gloves are an effective tool if used properly in a food premises. Paying attention to proper glove use will minimize the chance of contaminating food and therefore reduce the chances of making your customers sick. ■

Food Safety Resources

As a food premises operator or worker in the food services industry, having access to accurate food safety information is vital. However, there are many sources for this type of information and deciding on where to start may be challenging.

Your local health authority is a great place to start and has many helpful resources such as signs on hand washing and ware washing methods, application packages that include information on writing a food safety and sanitation plan, and previous editions of the Food Safety Update. You may also find food safety educational bulletins on topics such as what to do during a boil water advisory.

Your local Environment Health Officer (EHO) is also available to help you if you have any questions related to food safety.

For **Fraser Health**: To contact a Fraser Health EHO, call 604-587-3936. Let the operator know in which city your premises is located and they can connect you with an EHO. You can also ask the operator to direct you to the duty EHO.

For **Vancouver Coastal Health**: The Vancouver Coastal Health website contains information on how to contact an EHO in that health authority: <http://www.vch.ca/public-health/environmental-health-inspections/restaurant-food-safety>

In addition to your local health authority you will find a wide variety of food safety resources on the BC Centre for Disease Control and the BC Ministry of Health websites including guidelines and how to write a food safety plan.

BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/food-premises-guidelines>

BC Ministry of Health: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety/food-safety-sanitation-plans>

As a reminder, food safety training is now a legal requirement in all BC restaurants. For all your needs related to **FOODSAFE**, check out their website: www.foodsafe.ca ■

Feedback

Tell us what you think of our Food Safety Update and topics you would like to see in future issues. Contact liz.postnikoff@fraserhealth.ca or Claudia.Kurzac@vch.ca.

This update has been prepared and published as a collaboration between Health Protection departments in Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health.

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www.vch.ca/foodsafety
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