

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*

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Informed Dining

Giving consumers access to nutrition information to make informed choices

The Informed Dining program was developed in 2011 by the Province of British Columbia in collaboration with the restaurant industry and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. It is a nutrition disclosure program that is voluntary for the private sector, but has been mandated for B.C. health care facility restaurants.

Who can apply to the program?

The program is available to all restaurants in Canada with a minimum of one outlet located in B.C.

Why should a restaurant participate?

- By participating in the program, your restaurant will be responding to the growing trend and public interest in nutrition.
- Being located in a health care facility, your restaurant can set an example to support customers making healthier choices.
- In addition, the Informed Dining program complements new calorie menu labelling requirements in Ontario by providing full nutritional information to consumers.

What are the requirements?

Participating restaurants must provide guests with the calorie and nutrient values of standard menu items at or before the point of ordering. They also must display the Informed Dining program logo and directional statement advising consumers that nutrition information is available.



How is the program monitored?

In B.C., Environmental Health Officers will verify that program requirements are being met as part of their regular food safety inspections. To date, there are 79 restaurants located in health care facilities participating and 1,834 in the private sector. The latest report for private sector restaurants shows a 72% compliance on all program verification components.

Learn more about the program at www.InformedDining.ca or call Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1. ■

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Bug Spotlight:

Listeriosis

Listeriosis is a rare but serious infection caused by eating food contaminated with *Listeria* bacteria. These bacteria are normally found in the environment such as in soil and untreated water.

Listeriosis mainly affects older adults, those with weakened immune systems, pregnant women and newborns. Symptoms can start 3 to 70 days after eating contaminated food and include fever, headache, diarrhea, vomiting, and muscle aches. Severe illness can cause confusion, stiff neck and meningitis. Infection during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, premature birth or newborn death.

Listeria can grow at refrigeration temperatures and survives freezing. It also survives on the surfaces of equipment and utensils. However, *Listeria* can be killed by high temperatures such as during cooking.

Foods commonly associated with *Listeria* include raw milk, soft cheeses, deli meats, refrigerated seafood such as smoked salmon and prepared ready-to-eat foods such as pre-cut fruits and salads.

To prevent contamination, always follow good food handling practices and maintain your premises in a sanitary condition.

- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Do not use unpasteurized dairy products.
- Cook meat to safe internal temperatures.
- Separate raw meats from cooked and/or ready-to-eat foods.
- Use precooked or ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible.
- Clean and sanitize food processing equipment such as slicers; follow your Sanitation Plan or the manufacturer's instructions. ■

Fermentation

What do sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and kombucha tea have in common?

Fermentation is a process by which organic substances in foods are converted into simpler compounds by micro-organisms such as yeasts, bacteria and moulds. Sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and kombucha tea are all examples of fermented foods.



Fermentation is carried out for a variety of reasons including food preservation and to improve the taste and texture of food. It is gaining in popularity as some fermented foods are a source of beneficial bacteria known as probiotics.

However, it is important to be aware that foodborne illnesses have been associated with fermented foods including those caused by toxic compounds created during the fermentation process. Therefore, it is important to use a standardized recipe and maintain good hygiene when fermenting foods. Some fermented foods also require the use of a commercial starter culture.

If you would like to ferment a food item in your food premises, please contact your local Environmental Health Officer and submit a Food Safety Plan for review and approval. ■

Catering and Food Safety Plans

Catering a meal might seem similar to preparing food in a restaurant, but there are key points about catering that require special consideration. Therefore, it is important to include preparation of catered food in your Food Safety Plan.

Catering often involves the preparation of large volumes food in advance and the storage and transportation of food to the event. Advanced preparation is one of the most common causes of foodborne illness. If you cook food in batches, make sure it is not stored in the Danger Zone, above 4° C or below 60° C, while you prepare other foods. After preparing food, store it in covered food grade containers and when you transport potentially hazardous foods make sure it is stored at or below 4° C or at 60° C or above. Make sure you know what equipment is available at the location of the event and what you have to bring from your premises.

Being organized and having a written Food Safety Plan will help you prepare safe food efficiently. ■



Emergency Preparedness

Food safety during a power outage

During a power outage the safety of the food you serve may be compromised depending on the length of the outage and the utilities that are affected. During most power outages you will need to close your food premises as utilities such as lighting and hot water are not available and equipment such as dishwashers and refrigerators are inoperable. Food preparation during a power outage is not recommended. It is your responsibility to ensure that the food you serve is safe and in the event of a power outage your employees know what to do.



During a power outage

- Avoid opening refrigerator and freezer doors frequently. Unopened refrigerators should keep food cold for up to 4 hours and a freezer should keep food frozen for 24 to 48 hours.
- Record the time of the power failure.
- Monitor and record the temperature of coolers, freezers and food in hot holding units as outlined in your Food Safety Plan.
- Throw out foods that are being cooked if you were unable to finish cooking them.
- Do not place hot foods in refrigerators or freezers.
- Close your premises if you don't have basic utilities such as hot and cold running water.

After a power outage

- Make sure all equipment such as dishwashers and refrigerators are working properly.
- Throw out refrigerated potentially hazardous foods if the internal temperature of the food has been greater than 4°C for more than 2 hours.
- Throw out frozen foods that are completely thawed and if the temperature of the food is greater than 4°C.
- Throw out hot held potentially hazardous foods if the internal temperature of the food has been less than 60°C for more than 2 hours.

Wild Mushrooms

Handle with care

BC has many different kinds of wild mushrooms that are good to eat including morel, chanterelle, oyster, and pine mushrooms. However many kinds of wild mushrooms that people collect to eat also have poisonous look-alike cousins. For most people not experienced in collecting wild mushrooms, it is often hard to know for sure whether a mushroom is edible or poisonous. For example, to the untrained eye, pine mushrooms can look very similar to certain types of

deadly Amanita mushrooms. While most people who eat poisonous mushrooms suffer only mild effects, some people get very sick and have even died.

So what does this mean for you - if you are thinking about using wild mushrooms in your food premises? The rules in BC around using wild mushrooms in food premises are vague. Food premises are required to get their food from "approved sources". For foods like fresh produce, this usually means the produce comes from farms that are licensed and then the food is processed and packaged in a factory that is inspected regularly. Wild mushrooms are not grown like regular foods. They are picked "in the wild" and do not come from a licenced farm; once they are picked, they are usually processed in the pickers' homes. So for food safety, we are relying on the knowledge and experience of the picker to ensure

that the wild mushrooms are not poisonous.

If you are thinking of using wild mushrooms in your food premises, you must be absolutely sure that your picker or supplier has the knowledge and experience to accurately identify the mushrooms he or she picks. You should never buy wild mushrooms "from some guy in the back alley". Just one mistake by the picker could cost you your business and even worse, it could cost someone's life. Always remember, as the food premises operator, you are responsible for making sure that the food you serve is safe to eat. ■



Answers to crossword on page 4

Down

1. Listeria
3. Sanitize
4. Hot
5. Fermentation
9. Informed
11. Danger zone (2 words)
12. Biofilm
13. Power

Across

2. Amanita
6. Approved
7. Safety
8. Meningitis
13. Probiotic

Sanitation of Ice Machines

Ice machines are a commonly used piece of equipment in food premises. However, the routine cleaning and sanitizing of this equipment may be overlooked.

Cleaning and sanitizing ice machines is important to ensure your customers receive safe ice. Improperly maintained ice machines can lead to the growth of microorganisms on the interior surface of the machine known as a biofilm. The biofilm protects disease causing microorganisms from sanitizers and also promotes the growth of moulds. Ice that comes in contact with biofilms and mould may become contaminated and there have been several documented

outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness traced back to the use of contaminated ice.

Therefore, cleaning and sanitizing ice machines should be conducted on a regular basis and these procedures should be described in your Sanitation Plan. As each ice machine will have its own set of cleaning guidelines you should refer to the manufacturer's instructions for further direction.

In addition to poorly maintained equipment, ice may become contaminated as a result of poor food handling practices (see the following tips to prevent contamination).



Crossword

Test your food safety knowledge



Follow these tips to prevent contaminating ice:

- Wash hands before handling ice.
- Use an ice scoop; do not handle ice with hands.
- Hold the ice scoop by the handle and do not touch other parts of the scoop.
- Store the ice scoop outside of the ice machine in a sanitized container.
- Do not return unused ice to the ice machine. ■

Across

2. Type of poisonous mushroom
6. _____ source of foods
7. Food _____ Plan
8. Symptom of Listeriosis
9. Nutrition disclosure program _____ Dining
11. 4°C to 60°C is the _____ _____ (2 words)
13. Beneficial bacteria

Down

1. Can grow at refrigeration temperatures
3. Clean and _____ ice machines
4. Store _____ foods at or greater than 60° C
5. Preserves foods
10. Type of fermented food
12. Collection of microorganisms
13. _____ outage

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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