

# Food *for thought*

January 2013, Volume 4 Issue 3

A newsletter for Fairfax County food establishment owners and operators and their employees

## An Approved Food Source

One risk factor for foodborne illness is an unapproved or unsafe food source. Food that is prepared for sale to the general public must go through an approval process—by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or US Department of Agriculture (USDA)—before it reaches your storeroom shelves. Whether you purchase your food directly from a local grocery store or have food supplies delivered by a food distributor, that food has gone through an initial regulatory process for food safety. However, even food that has gone through an inspection and approval process can become unsafe by being mishandled during storage and delivery.

Food safety in your food establishment actually begins at the back door during the receiving process. If possible, schedule deliveries when they can be received properly. Food that requires refrigeration or freezing should not be left piled high in a hallway until someone has time to

put it away.

In addition, you should inspect deliveries immediately. All potentially hazardous foods should be refrigerated or frozen when delivered to you. Take sample temperatures of all refrigerated and frozen foods with a *calibrated* thermometer (learn more about calibrating a food thermometer in the previous issue of *Food for Thought*). Take temperatures of bulk foods by placing the thermometer *between* the bags or boxes. Refrigerated foods must be at 41°F or less when delivered to you. (There are two exceptions listed on page 2.\*)

Other food conditions should be checked during delivery, such as color, texture and odor. Employees should use their senses—touch, smell and sight—to determine if a food should be accepted or rejected. Some conditions to be aware of are:

1. Beef should be bright cherry red and have a USDA



*continued Page 2*

## Food Safety Reminders

- Wash Hands Often!
- Don't handle ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.
- Report symptoms of foodborne illness to management.
- Food must come from an approved source.
- Cook foods to proper temperatures.
- Use a food thermometer!
- Keep hot foods **HOT** — above 135°F.
- Keep cold foods **COLD** — below 41°F.
- Keep foods out of the **Danger Zone** (41°F - 135°F).
- Wash, rinse and sanitize food-contact surfaces regularly.
- Wash Hands Often!

Fairfax County Health Department  
10777 Main Street, Suite 111  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
703-246-2444, TTY 711  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food)



inspection mark. Pork should be pink with white fat. Brown color, slimy surface or sour odor indicates the meat is of questionable quality.

2. Poultry should have both a USDA inspection stamp and a grading stamp. Its color should be uniform—no purple or green discoloration. The wings should not have dark tips—red tips are okay. There also should be no odor and the meat should be firm and retain its form when touched.
3. Fresh fish should have bright shiny skin with clear, full eyes. A mild ocean or seaweed odor is acceptable. Beware of a strong fishy smell and cloudy, sunken eyes. The fish should retain form when touched.
4. \*Fresh shellfish (clams, oysters and mollusks) may be received at a temperature of 45°F but must be cooled to 41°F within 4 hours. Shellfish must be purchased from certified shellfish suppliers and include a shellstock identification tag, which is kept on the container (bag or basket) until empty; the identification tag should be kept on file for 90 days from the date that the last shellfish was used.



5. \*Fresh shell eggs must have a USDA inspection stamp and be 45°F or less when received. Shells should be clean and unbroken. There should be no odor.

6. You should purchase only pasteurized dairy products—milk, cheese and ice cream. All milk and milk products should be labeled Grade A.

7. Canned goods must be checked carefully for damage. Do not accept swollen, leaking, rusted or dented cans, or unlabeled canned products.



8. Dry goods should have intact packaging that is in good condition. Dampness, abnormal color or odor and any indication of roach or rodent infestation are all reasons to reject a dry goods delivery.

Remember—food safety begins at the back door. Proper receiving is a key factor in determining that the food you prepare for your customers has been safely delivered and is safe to eat if prepared properly. Once received, it is now up to the food preparers to maintain food safety with proper storage and preparation practices. If you have any questions about the receiving process contact the Health Department at 703-246-2444, TTY 711.

## Kitchen Corner Quiz

Would you ACCEPT or REJECT the deliveries below?

1. Steaks that are bright, cherry red? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
2. Chicken that is delivered on ice at 40°F? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
3. A shipment of clams in a container without a shellstock identification tag? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
4. A case of peaches with large dents along the seams of the cans? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
5. A damp bag of rice? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
6. Whole chicken with dark wing tips? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
7. Fresh pork chops received at an internal temperature of 50°F? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
8. Fresh shellfish delivered at 45°F? (A) Accept or (B) Reject
9. True or false? It is okay to use a recalled food product if it is cooked thoroughly. (True or False)

Quiz answers: 1.A; 2.A; 3.B; 4.B; 5.B; 6.B; 7.B; 8.A; 9.False

## Food Recalls

Periodically, there will be a recall of a food product by the manufacturer. The recall notice will describe the steps to take if you have a recalled product in your inventory. The main thing to remember is that a recalled food product may not be used in food preparation for your customers. You can get more information about food recalls by visiting [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food) or [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov). The Health Department recommends that you check for recall updates weekly or sign up for automated alerts that are emailed directly to you.

## Stay Connected!

