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Food for thought

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

Recognizing The Best

The Fairfax County Health Department has presented **nine local food service establishments with "14 Carrot Gold" Food Safety Excellence Awards**. The honor recognizes establishments that demonstrate consistent food safety practices and promote food safety education among their employees.

"Food service establishments are critical public health partners that ensure food safety in our community," said Fairfax County Health Department Director of Environmental Health Pieter Sheehan. "We're pleased that the vast majority of the establishments in our community maintain high food safety standards, particularly those we're recognizing this year."

The 2014 recipients of the Fairfax County Health Department's "14 Carrot Gold" Food Safety Awards are:

- Al-Maza (10427 North St., Fairfax)
- Latino Pollo a La Brasa (7028 Commerce St., Springfield)
- Maple Ave Restaurant (147 Maple Ave., Vienna)
- Mazadar Restaurant (11725 Lee Hwy., Fairfax)
- Moby Dick House of Kabob (444 W. Broad St., Falls Church)
- Pan Am Family Restaurant (3051 Nutley St., Fairfax)
- Panera Bread (6670 Richmond Hwy., Alexandria)
- Sugar Palm Thai Restaurant (5580 Vincent Gate Ter., Alexandria)
- Westfield High School (4700 Stonecroft Blvd. Chantilly)

Award recipients must meet the following criteria:

- **Hold a valid Permit** to Operate a Food Service Establishment from the Fairfax County Health Department and be in good standing with the department;
- Received **no critical violations** at the completion of all inspections conducted during the past two years;
- Received **no more than six non-critical violations** during inspections conducted in the last year; and
- Employees (other than the certified food manager) are able to **explain and/or demonstrate proper food handling procedures** related to the operation.

Food service establishments may be nominated for a "14 Carrot Gold" Food Safety Excellence Award by members of the industry, members of the public or Health Department inspectors. An awards team of Health Department staff reviews nominations and selects winners. Congratulations to the 2014 award winners!

AMC Revisited

In the last issue of *Food for Thought*, the idea of active managerial control (AMC) was discussed. AMC is a *preventive* food safety management system. AMC focuses on preventing a food safety risk rather than reacting when an inspector points out the uncontrolled food safety risk. The manager becomes the inspector on a daily basis. In coming weeks, there will be a special program rolled out from the Health Department to help food service owners and managers use active managerial control. Your inspector will also have more information and tips on how to work AMC into your daily routines. Keep a look out for this information!

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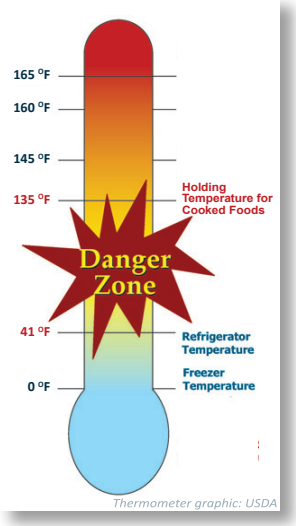
The Danger Zone!

There are many "Golden Rules" in food safety. One such rule is: Keep hot foods hot; Keep cold foods cold! "Hot" means cooked fully and then held at 135°F or higher. "Cold" means keeping stored food at 41°F or lower. The temperature range between 41°F and 135°F is called the **Danger Zone**. Room temperature is in the Danger Zone. In the Danger Zone, bacteria grow very rapidly, doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes. As bacteria grow, the food becomes more likely to cause a customer to get sick. Active managerial control (AMC) would mean the manager has steps in place to reduce the chances of food being in the Danger Zone for any great length of time.

Some activities which can place food in the Danger Zone are:

1) Receiving: Is food put in the refrigerator or freezer immediately or is it left on the floor, at room temperature, until someone "gets to it?"
2) Cooling: The food starts out hot and must go through the Danger Zone (room temperature) to get to 41°F in the refrigerator. Hot food must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F within two hours and continue cooling to 41°F within a total of six hours. Is a log being kept to make sure the temperatures are reached at the right times?
3) Reheating: The food starts out cold and must go through the Danger Zone to be heated to 165°F. Reheating to 165°F must be done within two hours.
4) Improper cold holding: Are food temperatures checked regularly to see that the food is kept at 41°F or lower? Do you use temperature logs?
5) Improper hot holding: Are food temperatures checked regularly to see that food is kept at 135°F or higher?
6) Thawing: Do not thaw at room temperature! While the inside of the food is thawing, the outside of the food will be at room temperature for too long of a time. Thaw frozen items under running water or overnight in a refrigerator.



Are you using active managerial control (AMC) to AVOID THE DANGER ZONE? Some ideas were given above. Your inspector can offer other ideas as well.

Lead by Example

When it comes to food safety practices, food service employees learn best from the example set by the Person-In-Charge (PIC). Here are some examples of typical practices the PIC can demonstrate to his or her workers:

- Wash hands frequently and correctly.
- Do not allow bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.
- Monitor safe food product temperatures with a thermometer.
- Promptly refrigerate meats, poultry, dairy and egg products when delivered. Rapidly cool potentially hazardous food.
- Practice efficient date marking.
- Demonstrate the proper use of the 3 vat sink: wash, rinse and sanitize, and air dry.
- Use sanitizer test strips every day.
- Positively reinforce safe food handling techniques.
- Wash hands frequently and correctly.

Are you leading by example?

Training Materials on the Web

There are multiple training materials available on the Health Department webpage www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/food/foodtrain.htm. Posters, temperature logs, hand washing signs and fact sheets are just a few of the items available in up to ten languages. All may be downloaded from the web page. If you are unable to download from the web, you may call the Health Department at 703-246-2444 to request mailed copies.

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