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Volume 3 Issue 4
Spring 2012

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 food 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!**

Food for Thought

What is Date Marking?

Ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food that is prepared in the restaurant and kept in a refrigerator for more than 24 hours must be date marked. A date mark is also referred to as a "use-by-date." Ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food that is prepared in the restaurant may be kept refrigerated for up to 7 days. Day 1 is the day the food was prepared. Day 7 is the "use-by-date." When the food has been prepared and will be kept in the refrigerator for more than 24 hours, the "use-by-date" must be marked on the food container. This is date marking. The food must be eaten, sold or discarded by the "use-by-date." Example: lasagna is made on May 1. This is Day 1. The "use-by-date" will be May 7. There is a total of seven days that the lasagna may be kept in the refrigerator. After the seventh day, the food must be discarded.



In addition, when *commercially prepared* ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food is opened for use in the restaurant it must be date marked if it will be stored in a refrigerator for more than 24 hours. The same seven day limit applies. Example: a package of deli meat is opened on May 1. Day 1 is the day the package was opened. Day 7 is the "use-by-date." After the seventh day, the food must be discarded.

What foods need to be date marked?

If you answer YES to all five questions below, then the food needs to be date marked.

- 1) Does the food require refrigeration?
- 2) If commercially packaged, has the original package been opened?
- 3) Is the food ready-to-eat? Could this food be eaten just like it is, regardless of temperature? Ready-to-eat foods include cold, cooked deli meats, boiled eggs and cold, cooked macaroni.
- 4) Is the food potentially hazardous? Will it grow bacteria?
- 5) Will the food be kept for longer than 24 hours? (Page 2)

Date marking must be used even if the foods already have an expiration date on them. The expiration date on a packaged food is a manufacturer's *food quality* date. Date marking is a *food safety* date.

If the date marked food is refrigerated and then placed in a freezer, the use-by-date will be extended. For example, if food is prepared today, refrigerated for three days and then frozen for four days, the food may then be kept refrigerated for another four days in the refrigerator. There is a total of seven days in the refrigerator. After the seventh day in the refrigerator, the food must be discarded.

For more information on date marking, contact your local inspector or the Health Department at 703-246-2444, TTY 711.

Warm Weather is Coming!

Potentially hazardous food must be kept at 41°F or less to prevent bacteria from growing and making people sick. As warm weather approaches and temperatures rise in the kitchen, refrigerators may struggle to maintain 41°F. Most refrigerators run best at room temperatures below 85°F. Now is the time to take steps to keep your refrigerators running properly and keep your food at a safe storage temperature.



- 1) Have the refrigerators and freezers serviced ahead of the hot summer season. If a refrigerator reads 41°F two hours before opening, it is doubtful that it will keep that temperature during the busy lunch rush. Set the temperature to be 35°-37°F when the refrigerators are not in use. Check refrigerator temperatures first thing in the morning. If refrigerators are set at the correct

temperature, they should keep food at 41°F or less, even during the busy times of business.

- 2) Refrigeration units under and across from the cookline can be a challenge because they may have to work harder to maintain 41°F. All refrigerators must have a built-in temperature gauge or an internal thermometer. Check temperatures throughout the day. Your area inspector can help you set up a temperature log, if necessary. If food temperatures are going up, adjust the refrigerator setting and temporarily move the food to a refrigerator that will keep the proper temperature.
- 3) When food is delivered, put it in the refrigerator quickly. When left unrefrigerated, the food temperature will quickly move into the Danger Zone (41° - 135°F). In the Danger Zone, foodborne bacteria can grow more quickly and possibly make people sick.

Proper refrigeration and temperature control of foods is very important in reducing the risk of foodborne illness. Now is the time to make sure your refrigerators will get you through the summer season.

Kitchen Corner Quiz



1. When food that is prepared in the restaurant is to be refrigerated for more than 24 hours, a date mark must be used to remind when to discard the food. (T or F)
2. Another name for a date mark is the "use-by-date". (T or F)
3. The "use-by-date" may be 10 days from the date the food was prepared in the restaurant. (T or F)
4. Commercially packaged food such as deli meat doesn't need date marking because it is pre-cooked. (T or F)
5. The correct cold-hold temperature for potentially hazardous foods is 45°F. (T or F)
6. It is a good idea to have refrigerators serviced regularly to make sure they are cooling properly. (T or F)
7. If a refrigerator is out of temperature, the only thing to do is turn the thermostat down. (T or F)

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