K-STATE Kansas State University RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

Food Safety NEWS

Food Safety CURRENT NEWS

Protecting Consumers with Food Allergies

On the Web

Food Allergy

www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/Pubs/NCR/NCR-239.html

www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/FNTR2/NCR598G.PDF

www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/fntr2/NCR598SF.pdf

www.safetyalerts.com/rcls/category/alrgy.htm

www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/food.htm

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/foodallergy.html

www.farrp.unl.edu/farrp.htm

www.foodallergy.org/

www.fankids.org/

www.ift.org/publications/docshop/ft_shop/09-01/09_01_pdfs/09-01-sss-allergies.pdf

Food Safety

www.oznet.ksu.edu/foodsafety/

www.nal.usda.gov/foodborne/index.html

www.foodsafety.gov/

www.fightbac.org/

www.nal.usda.gov/fsrio/

Consumers with food allergies face daily challenges to prevent the consumption of foods that cause allergic reactions. The biggest challenge is reading the label to determine if the food they are allergic to is present. However, consumers do not know the many ways an ingredient may be labeled on a product. For example, casein and whey are components of milk. Wheat may be labeled as the type of wheat such as semolina or durum. When these names are used, they can mean the difference between life and death.

Thanks to efforts by food trade associations and consumer groups, consumers with allergies will be able to easily recognize harmful foods. A new set of guidelines have been developed to make food labels clearer, more consistent, and safer for food-allergic consumers. The labels are intended to be more consumer friendly.

The guidelines ask manufacturers to list each allergen by its common name. For example, milk, wheat, eggs, or shrimp. These terms should be near the ingredient statement, can be designated by an asterisk, be noted in parentheses following the technical name, or in a separated statement at the end of the ingredient list.

The guidelines also ask manufacturers to disclose all allergens regardless of the source. Some allergens may be part of a flavoring and present in very small amounts. This is very important for consumers with severe allergies and very sensitive at low levels.

Another labeling guideline is to list ingredients that may inadvertently enter into the product during manufacturing. This is known as a Supplemental Allergen Statement that is written with the words "may contain." Criteria to use to qualify as a "may contain" ingredient is as follows:

- It is documented that a known major food allergen is present either by visual or analytical testing.
- As a precaution, even when good manufacturing practices are followed, the food allergen risk is unavoidable.
- The allergen may be in some, but not all, of the product.
- The food allergen is potentially harmful.

The purpose of these guidelines is to make the label simple to read and understand. With food allergens affecting up to 7 million consumers, including 2 million children, it is important to inform these consumers of potentially hazardous foods. Many food manufacturers have voluntarily implemented these guidelines.

Source: IFIC Foundation Food Insight newsletter, May/June 2001

Children with Food Allergies: What Happens at School?

School is back in session across the country. Many children have special needs that must be taken care of to remain healthy at school and home. One of the most overlooked health problems is food allergies in children. According to a study done at Johns Hopkins Medical Institution, about one in five children with food allergies will have an allergic reaction during school hours. Many times, teachers do not know how to handle the attack properly.

Parents cannot assume teachers know how to handle allergic reactions. Parents must meet with teachers and other school officials to make sure the school is prepared and help them make the school environment as safe as possible. Instructions from the child's doctor are important as well as instructions to administer epinephrine.

The study was conducted on 132 children from ages 3 to 19. They found that 18 percent of the children had one or more allergic reactions at school. Fifteen percent were treated properly. Factors that were linked to the reactions included cafeteria errors, food sharing among children and classroom parties where cupcakes, which contained traces of peanut oil, were served. Peanuts are one of the most common food allergens.

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Turkey Terms

There are many kinds of turkey on the market today. Here are some definitions of terms you may see:

Fresh – the turkey is never chilled below 26˚ F. According to the National Turkey Federation, turkey doesn't freeze at 32˚ F.

Frozen – the turkey is chilled below 0˚ F. If defrosted, the label may say, "previously frozen."

Hard-chilled or not previously frozen – the turkey is chilled to below 26˚ F but above 0˚ F. It is labeled neither fresh nor frozen.

Organic – the turkey must be certified by a USDA-accredited certifying agency. It must be raised on 100 percent organic feed, allowed to be outside. This doesn't mean the turkey is a better quality.

Natural – no artificial ingredient or color added, and minimally processed. This term has nothing to do with raising the turkey.

Kosher – used only when the turkey is processed under rabbinical supervision. They are raised on grain, no antibiotics, and roam freely. They are also soaked in salt brine.

Self-basting – a fat and broth or water solution with spices, flavors, or other "approved substances" is added by injection or thorough marinating.

Premium – producers say difference is quality of feed. They are raised on nonfat grain, no antibiotics, and usually roam free. The bird grows slowly to develop a rich flavor and dense texture.

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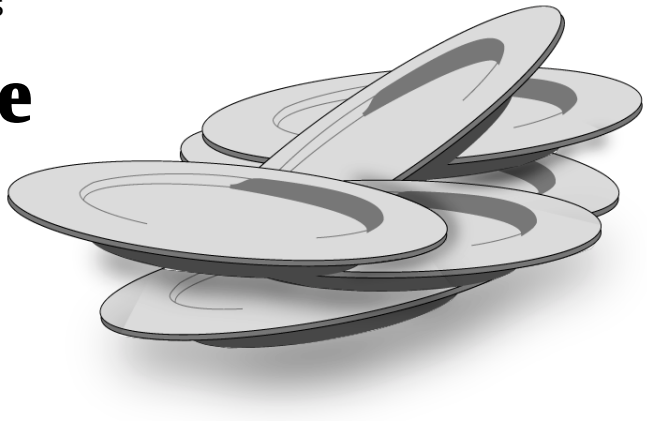
Food Safety CURRENT NEWS

Stacking the Dishes



Today's consumer enjoys spending time with friends and family by going out to eat at a restaurant. In fact, more consumers than ever are enjoying this social time than ever before. With this increased demand, restaurants must be increasingly aware of food safety practices and procedures. Managers fight employee turnover, unskilled workers, and increased opportunities for cross-contamination. These are a few of the factors that can lead to foodborne illness.

One factor in the food safety equation is proper sanitation of dishware. The 1999 FDA Food Code states that "items must be allowed to drain and to air dry before being stacked or stored. Stacking wet items such as pans prevents them from drying and may allow an environment where microorganisms can begin to grow." Stacking dishes before they are dried is known as wet-nesting. A study published in the Journal of The American Dietetic Association was conducted to determine if wet-nesting posed a potential hazard by increasing the incidence of foodborne illness.

The study consisted of 100 randomly selected breakfast serving plates from the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Portland, Oregon on a randomly selected day. Samples of each plate were taken after excess waste was removed for microbial testing. Fifty of the plates were washed in the dishwasher and immediately placed in stacks of 10 plates and allowed to sit for 24 hours. Samples were then taken for microbial testing. The remaining 50 plates were also washed in the dishwasher. These plates were allowed to air dry separately for 24 hours. Samples were then taken for microbial testing.

Specific microorganisms were not identified in this study. Results showed contamination in 95 of the 100 plates before washing. After washing and the 24 hour drying period, there was no significant difference between the air-dried and wet-nested plates after 24 hours of incubation. However, after 48 hours of incubation, significant differences were found. After 24 hours, two wet-nested plates and four air-dried plates had bacterial growth. After 48 hours, 13 wet-nested plates and four air-dried plates had growth. This shows that wet-nesting may be a concern after long periods of time. This is of significant concern for foodservice operations that serve food in hospitals and to immunocompromised persons.

Wet-nesting can be a threat if dishes sit for more than 24 hours. With the variety of food service operations in practice and the clientele they serve, further studies need to identify specific bacteria that may survive and grow if the dishes are wet-nested. With a rapidly growing elderly population and the increased popularity of eating in restaurants, it is important to implement preventive food safety methods as simple as proper handling of dishware.

Source: J. of Amer. Dietetic Assoc., Vol. 101, No. 8, pp. 933-934

School

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The study also found about 15 percent of the children had no doctor's instructions for treatment or medication. They also discovered some parents were not proactive in providing medication or information about their child. Some schools and doctors were also cited for not being proactive. However, the ultimate responsibility belongs to the parents.

Children with food allergies must have an emergency plan and medication available. Parents may want the child to wear a medical alert bracelet. Schools should have designated people in charge of handling these emergencies. These simple steps can help save the lives of many children.

Source: www.hopkinsmedicine.org/press/2001/august/010814.htm

Questions on Meat and Poultry Labeling

The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline has compiled some frequently asked questions regarding natural flavorings in meat and poultry. Natural flavorings are noted on labels in different ways. The following questions and answers from the Hotline will help clear up these differences.

Q What substances or ingredients can be listed as "natural flavor," "flavor," or "flavorings" rather than by a specific common or usual name?

A Ingredients such as ginger, black pepper, onion powder, garlic powder, celery powder, and garlic oil may be listed as one of the three categories mentioned above. They may be designated as "natural flavors" because they are substances used chiefly for flavor. They do not make a nutritional contribution, are not derived from an animal species, and there are no health concerns linked to them.

Q Can the terms "dried meat or poultry stocks," "dried broth," "meat extracts," and "dried beef plasma" be listed on meat and poultry labels as "natural flavorings?"

A No. Substances derived from animal sources must be identified as to the species of origin on the label and be consistent with the definition established by Federal regulation. For example, the listing on the label would read "dried chicken stock," "lamb extract," or "dried beef plasma."

Q If "pork extract" is added to a processed meat product for flavoring, can it be listed as "flavoring" in the ingredient statement or will it be identified as a "pork product?"

A "Pork extract" will appear in the ingredient statement on the label. It is defined as a meat product by Federal regulation and will always be identified by its common or usual name.

Q How will I know if there is monosodium glutamate (MSG) in a processed meat or poultry product?

A MSG is classified as a flavor enhancer by Federal regulation. When it is added to a product, it must be identified as "monosodium glutamate" on the label.

Q Are MSG and hydrolyzed protein related?

A Yes. MSG is the sodium salt of glutamic acid. Glutamic acid is an amino acid, one of the building blocks of protein. It is found in virtually all food and, in abundance, in food that is high in protein, including meat, poultry, cheeses, and fish. Hydrolyzed proteins, used by the food industry to enhance flavor, are simply proteins that have been chemically broken apart into amino acids. The chemical breakdown of proteins may result in the formation of free glutamate that joins with free sodium to form MSG. In this case, the presence of MSG does not need to be disclosed on labeling. Labeling is required when MSG is added as a direct ingredient.

Q Can hydrolyzed animal or vegetable protein be identified as "natural flavoring" on the label?

A No. FSIS regulation requires that animal or vegetable proteins must be specifically identified in the ingredient statement on the labels. The source of protein must also be disclosed. On the label, you will read "hydrolyzed *wheat* protein" or "hydrolyzed *milk* protein," not just hydrolyzed protein.

Source:www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/FAQ/flavorings.htm

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"Hen" vs. "Tom" – the sex designation of "hen" (female) or "tom" (male) turkey is optional and indicates size only. Toms are larger but both toms and hens should be equally tender.

Sources: Fine Cooking, Oct./Nov. 2001; USDA

Safe Turkey Handling

With the holidays fast approaching, questions on handling turkey safely will be asked. These Web sites should help you find the answers.

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/farmfreeze.htm

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/focustky,htm

www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/turkey/

www.butterball.com/

www.honeysucklewhite.com/

www.turkeyfed.org/

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/programs/mphotlin.htm

www.oznet.ksu.edu.foodsafety/News%20Releases/holidayfoodsafety.htm

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/tbstuff.pdf

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/tbthaw.PDF

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/tbcook.pdf

FAQs

Question: A person put a small frozen roast in a slow cooker on low, will it be safe to eat?

Answer: It is not recommended to put frozen foods in a slow cooker. It will take longer to cook and may not get cooked properly. All frozen food should be properly defrosted before cooking in a slow cooker. For more information on slow cooker safety, the USDA has a publication on this topic at:

www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/slocookr.htm

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K-State, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

Upcoming Events

October 16 & 17
Wichita
ServSafe
Sedgwick Co. Extension Education Center
Contact: Teresa Lang, 316-722-7721

November 13 & 14
Overland Park
ServSafe
Kansas City Regional Office Training Center
Contact: Nada Thoden, 913-764-6300

For Food Processors...

October 11
Overland Park
Sanitation and GMP Workshop
Contact Liz Boyle, 785-532-1247

October 12
Overland Park
Product Recall Workshop
Contact Liz Boyle at 785-532-1247

November 28-30
Lincoln, NE
HACCP Workshop
Contact Ryan Baumert at
1-888-688-4346

Other Events...

October 9 & 10
Wichita
Kansas Conference for Food Protection
Contact Stephen Paige, KDHE
785-296-0189