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WELCOME

Spring brings the beginning of the busy season in the hospitality trade with people celebrating the warmer weather and festive season by eating out more often. With increasing temperatures and custom it's a good time to remind staff how important good stock management procedures are and we cover this in our front page article.

In the first issue of our new foodborne illness organism column we cover Norovirus, a particularly contagious and virulent organism.

I hope you enjoy this issue of 4degreesC and find it useful; your feedback and questions are always welcome to: 4dCeditor@nzfsa.govt.nz

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Stock control

Controlling stock at all stages of the food production process is a vital step in the business of providing safe food. If a high risk food is kept for too long, even under favourable conditions, harmful bacteria can multiply. Also, foods with a longer shelf life whether canned, dried or frozen can deteriorate if they're kept for too long.

Every food business should have procedures in place to ensure goods are received, stored and used in a way that keeps them safe and suitable. Procedures to monitor food storage and plans of what to do when things go wrong are also important. Here are some things to think about when you're developing stock control procedures for your business:

Clarifying 'Use by' and 'Best before' dates

The 'Use by' date is applied to readily perishable foods (eg, contain fish, meat, eggs or dairy products) which will spoil and support the growth of pathogens if stored at room temperature. It indicates a date until which the food, if stored in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, will be safe to eat.

A 'Best before' date indicates a time by which the quality of the product can be guaranteed by the manufacturer. It's commonly applied to products that don't require any special methods of storage such as packs of biscuits and confectionery.

Incoming goods

All product deliveries should be inspected and only accepted if they meet your business requirements, such as:

- they're clearly identifiable and labelled (including a batch code)
- 'use by' or 'best before' dates are acceptable
- packaging is in good condition and completely contains the food
- the temperature of cold or heated food is appropriate eg, chilled products are cool, frozen food is frozen solid.

If delivery checks identify products which don't meet your expectations, reject the product. Remind the supplier of your requirements and standards.

Mark all incoming goods with the date they arrive and move chilled and frozen foods to cold storage as quickly as possible (within ten minutes).

Dry storage – for some fruit/vegetables, shelf-stable dried goods such as cereals and seasonings, canned and bottled foods remember to:

- store in pest-proof containers once packages have been opened. Don't 'top up' containers with new product; ensure the old product is used up first
- keep foods that contain allergens separate from other foods
- make storage areas pest-proof and keep them dry and clean
- identify and follow manufacturer's instructions once packaging has been opened, particularly if food needs refrigeration.

Refrigerated storage

Cover readily perishable food and store at the appropriate temperature (4°C for chilled or -18°C for frozen). You should:

- date food no longer in its original packaging with its original 'use by' date, or date identified by manufacturer for opened product
- date food made on site. A rule of thumb for readily perishable foods is to use within two days
- store cooked and raw food separately (either in separate chillers, on opposite sides of the same chiller or by keeping cooked or ready-to-eat food above raw food).

Stock management and monitoring

- introduce an ordering system that minimises the amount of stock held, particularly slow-selling foods or rarely-used ingredients
- follow the FIFO (first in first out) philosophy. As it's received, put new stock behind old stock in storage or display areas
- regularly monitor expiry dates and remove out-of-date foods from display or stock.












Combating high fat fries

The *Chip Group* is a collaboration of food and nutrition industry representatives coordinating a campaign to remove over 2500 tonnes of fat from the New Zealand food supply.

The first step is to collect data on hot chips to help build an accurate nutritional profile. The data includes information on serving sizes, costs, fat content, fat profile and the salt content of chips purchased from shops right across the country. When the data has been gathered and analysed, the *Chip Group* will develop industry standards/guidelines for optimal cooking and serving of chips.

An education and promotion strategy to communicate about and support the implementation of the standards will follow. One of the education tools will be online training modules for chip shop owners and their staff.

Until then, here's some tips for cooking tastier and healthier chips:

	<p>1. Use thick straight cut chips This shape absorbs less oil/fat. If frozen, don't thaw</p>		<p>7. Drain chips well Bang or vigorously shake basket twice and hang (at least 20 secs)</p>
	<p>2. Cook at 180°C Higher temperatures damage oil/fat and don't cook food more quickly Turn fryer to 140°C during quiet times</p>		<p>8. Look for signs of oil/fat breakdown Change oil/fat when it looks dark as older oil/fat increases cooking time and produces poor quality food</p>
	<p>3. Check thermostat often Use a catering thermometer or ask supplier</p>		<p>9. Filter oil/fat Daily if possible and skim often. This helps the oil/fat last longer</p>
	<p>4. Cook chips separately Fresh batter mix, crumbs, seasoning, sausages and seafood damage oil/fat</p>		<p>10. Clean fryers Daily if possible by scrubbing, rinsing with white vinegar solution and drain well (water damages oil/fat)</p>
	<p>5. Cook for 3-4 minutes</p>		<p>11. Cover fryer overnight Also cover during quiet times as sun, dust and air damages oil/fat</p>
	<p>6. Avoid big drops in temperature Don't overload baskets and fryers and keep fryers topped up</p>	<p>12. Use a recommended frying oil The frying oil should meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Saturated fat equal to, or less than 20% 2. Trans-fat equal to, or less than 1% 3. Linolenic acid equal to, or less than 3% <p>Frying mediums which meet these guidelines are available and may include high-oleic sunflower oil, high-oleic low-linolenic canola oil, olive oil, rice bran oil, and some blends based on these types.</p>	

Food Standards Code Corner

Did You Know?

FSANZ have decided to focus on non-regulatory approaches for reducing trans-fat levels in the Australian and New Zealand food supply. Trans-fat levels will be reviewed in early 2009 to determine whether these non-regulatory approaches are working or whether regulation is required.

Norovirus outbreaks hits sports tournament

Over the last ten years, a 'new' organism has made its impact felt on the food industry and in the wider community. Norovirus hit the national news a year ago when people became infected from uncooked, imported oysters at a rugby event at Eden Park, and it struck again recently at another sports tournament in Christchurch.

The Christchurch investigation began when people reported they had fallen ill after eating at the tournament's opening function. It soon became apparent to the Public Health Unit investigators that this was a viral attack rather than a bacterial foodborne illness outbreak when a second wave of people got sick.

Investigators found that a salad was a common factor among the first group of sick people. The food handler who prepared the salad hadn't been suffering any symptoms while working but she began vomiting and diarrhoea shortly after arriving home that day, followed closely by family members. Norovirus was subsequently identified.

The effects on the tournament were severe. Games had to be delayed as players, supporters and officials became sick. A planned social event was cancelled to prevent further infection and overseas attendees had to rearrange travel plans as they were required to be clear of symptoms for 48 hours before flying.

Although little can be done to prevent a person who unknowingly suffers illness from infecting others, food businesses must take precautions to guard against the effects of a potential Norovirus contamination. If a food handler or customer vomits it should be treated as a possible viral contamination. The area must be thoroughly cleaned with a chlorine-based sanitiser.



Information to limit the effect of a viral outbreak on your food business.

Norovirus facts:

- it's **very** contagious - as few as 10 Norovirus particles could be enough to infect a healthy person.
- particles are carried in fine aerosols during projectile vomiting and violent diarrhoea. These are ingested by people and make them ill. They are also carried on skin, hair, clothing and surfaces
- a person can be infectious and pass on the virus before symptoms develop
- incubation period is short - usually 15-50 hours; symptoms come on suddenly and usually last for 1- 2 days
- symptoms include diarrhoea, violent (often projectile) vomiting and stomach cramps. Mild fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, tiredness and nausea are also possible
- carers and food handlers need to be symptom free for 48 hours before returning to work.

Protect your business by:

- having a fair and flexible sickness policy which ensures staff are aware of their obligations to report any symptoms of foodborne illness and of the implications to your business if they're in close contact with someone with a 'tummy bug'. Consider paying them to stay away when they're in high risk situations
- training staff well in personal hygiene and ensuring there is a supply of clean uniforms for staff to change into when they get to work
- having a plan to trace and dispose of food at risk of contamination by a sick staff member (freezing doesn't kill these viruses)
- using chlorine-based sanitisers for cleaning if someone has vomited.

For more advice contact your Environmental Health Officer at your local Council or a Health Protection Officer at your closest Public Health Unit.

NZFSA Updates

New Food Bill

Good progress is being made on drafting the new Food Bill. The Transition Policy, which describes how NZFSA plans to move the food industry from the current to the new system is now available on our website. There will be a six month lead-in period before implementation begins, with business sectors brought into the new system over a five year period. Watch this space for updates on the Bill's passage through the parliamentary process and when you'll have another chance to have your say.

Labelling Guide

NZFSA has produced an online food labelling guide for food for sale within New Zealand.

It has been designed to be used as a companion to the Food Standards Code and consists of a series of step-by-step flowcharts that take a systematic approach to key labelling standards, and includes a series of tables and flowcharts designed to be worked through section by section to identify what information is required on a product label. The guide will be useful for anyone developing or checking food labels. It can be downloaded from: www.nzfsa.govt.nz/labelling-composition/publications/a-nz-food-standards-code/labelling-guide

Increased availability of raw milk cheeses into the market means new challenges for food service staff

You might have heard the publicity around the recent change to food laws which allows a greater variety of raw milk cheeses to be directly imported into New Zealand.

Previously, some raw milk cheeses were allowed to be sold here (mostly hard cheeses which are relatively a low risk product), but the law change will mean that a softer raw milk cheese called Roquefort can now be directly imported into New Zealand.

Connoisseurs of fine foods relish the thought of being able to buy this highly regarded product which means it could become a popular addition to cheese boards or used as an ingredient in other restaurant meals. But caution is required for some people as raw milk products pose a higher risk for certain vulnerable groups.

Babies and toddlers, the frail elderly, expectant mothers and anyone whose immune system could be compromised because of a chronic illness, long-term medication or a recent operation should avoid Roquefort cheese. These people should only eat pasteurised cheeses.

For café and waiting staff this poses a dilemma. You can't always tell if someone fits into one of the vulnerable groups. If your establishment has a raw milk cheese on the cheese board or in another menu item, you should consider a couple of options.

Firstly, note it on the menu. Your note should say that the product has been made from raw (or unpasteurised) milk and poses a higher risk for some people.

Then, ask people when they order an item which includes a raw milk cheese if they're aware that it's in there, and remind them that raw milk cheeses are not recommended for those groups listed above.

By taking responsibility to pass on this information to your customers, waiting staff can show their knowledge of their menu and provide important advice to people which, if not passed on to the right people, could have serious implications.

For more information about raw milk cheeses and Roquefort cheese in particular, check out NZFSA's website.



Handling waste food

Did you know that the Meat and Food Waste for Pigs Regulations prohibit the distribution, collection, or trade of food waste containing meat that may be fed to pigs, unless it's treated to 100°C for one hour?

Biosecurity New Zealand is currently running an awareness campaign to inform everyone involved with raising pigs about how they can reduce the risk of introducing into New Zealand a range of diseases, including Foot and Mouth Disease, Swine Vesicular Disease, Classical Swine Fever, PRRS and other exotic diseases of pigs and livestock.

To do your part in protecting our health, lifestyle, environment and our economic wellbeing ensure your food waste is legally disposed of. Obtain a guarantee from your food waste collector that any food waste containing meat will not be fed to pigs or will be heated to 100°C for one hour beforehand.