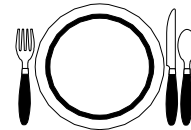


BACKBURNER NEWS



Genesee County Health Department

Spring 2002

A Newsletter for and about the Foodservice Industry in Genesee County by the Division of Environmental Health Services

Spring into the New Year

As spring approaches, we begin our second year under the Michigan Food Law of 2000. By now, most all of you are familiar with consumer (menu) advisories, employee health policies, rules against bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods, new temperatures for cooking and storing potentially hazardous foods, date marking, demonstration of knowledge requirements, and all of the other changes that came with the new state law.

Genesee County food service operators are to be commended for the work they have done to meet the new requirements. Although there is work left to do, most of our operators are in compliance with most or all of the new requirements. What does this mean for people dining out in Genesee County? It means safer food.

The year 2001, the first year under the new food law, saw foodborne illness complaints to the health department drop by 35% over the year before. In the same period, general sanitation complaints dropped almost 10%. This is great news!

In the media, the food service industry is sometimes the topic of negative and sensational news stories. The real story, the one you won't see on TV or read in the paper, is that the vast majority of food service operators are doing a good job. The best way to counter the negative press is to assure yourselves and your customers that you consistently meet or beat minimum requirements.

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I encourage all readers to work continually to improve the safety of the foods they prepare and serve. Learn the code requirements and follow them. Attend a food service management certification course. Send all your employees to the health department's Food Worker's Class, especially your new hires. Take the time during your inspection to discuss safe food handling practices with your sanitarian. Take advantage of the health department's HACCP program and design your own food safety plan. Not only are these efforts good for business, they are good for public health.

Ward Lindsay, Food Program Supervisor

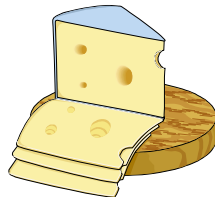
中国语言食品安全训练录影带

Chinese 餐馆食品安全, 20 分钟录影带,
现在是可得到的经由 Genesee
县健康部门。录影带是可得到的在广州和北京话里。费用是\$5.00 每磁带。题目包括: 收购和接受食物, 适当的存贮, 食物配制, 交付, 个人卫生, 清洁和作卫生处理。请停止或与 Genesee
县健康部门联系于(810) 257-3603 今天以收购你的拷贝!

Chinese Language Food Safety Training Videotapes

"Chinese Restaurant Food Safety", a 20-minute videotape, is now available through the Genesee County Health Department. Videotapes are available in both **Cantonese** and **Mandarin**. The cost is \$5.00 per tape. Topics include: purchasing and receiving food, proper storage, food preparation, delivery, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitizing. Please stop by or contact the Genesee County Health Department at (810) 257-3603 to purchase your copy today!

Who Marked My Cheese?



Question: Are all cheeses required to be date marked once the package is opened in a food service establishment?

Answer: No. Hard and semi-soft aged cheeses and pasteurized processed cheese are exempt from the Food Code's date marking provision relating to refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food (see chart below).

The 1999 FDA Food Code specifies that ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food prepared and held refrigerated for more than 24 hours in a food service establishment must be marked at the time of preparation to indicate the date by which the food shall be *consumed* or *discarded*.

Why do most refrigerated ready-to-eat potentially foods need to be date marked?

Date marking food is now required under the 1999 FDA Food Code because of the potential for growth over time of organisms such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Yersinia enterocolitica*. Refrigeration does not prevent growth of these organisms. However, the rate of growth is slowed as the temperature decreases. Dating requirements are set to minimize the potential hazard of growth of these organisms when food is refrigerated.

But what about soft cheeses?

Studies have shown those soft cheeses such as Brie, Camembert, Cottage, Ricotta, and Teleme can support growth of *L. monocytogenes* and have been associated with foodborne illnesses. So, once packages of soft cheese are opened in your establishment, they do need to be date marked.

Food Donation Program in the Works

According to national statistics, approximately 96 BILLION pounds of useable food is discarded in this country every year. In an attempt to reclaim some of this food on a local level, GCHD staff have been working to put together a program that will make it possible for local food service establishments to donate food that is still wholesome to local food banks and soup kitchens.

Most restaurants come across food that they know is still in good condition, but for reasons of their own, feel it must be discarded. GCHD would like this food to be collected, and properly held until such time as it can be taken to a local recipient. Of course, other foods specifically made for donation are also a great idea.

In order to make this program successful, we will use HACCP principles to assure that the food stays wholesome. This reassures not only the recipient facilities that are receiving good food, but also the donors, so they know that foods that they deliver will be kept in good condition until served. This is a winning situation not only for the donors and recipient sites, but also for the people we are trying to help.

So far, approximately 20 restaurants have responded to a preliminary questionnaire, saying that they would be willing either to donate foods or to help transport it to the right places. There are still several hurdles that need to be cleared before this program can get underway, but the prospects are good.

We thank all the facilities that have responded, and will get information out to you as soon as it becomes available.

If you would like to participate in this program or find out more, please contact either Jeff Kost at 257-3847 or Carrie Dickhans at 237-6164.

Hard and semi-soft cheeses EXEMPT from date marking

Hard cheeses	Semi-soft cheeses	
Asiago medium	Asiago fresh and soft	Gouda
Asiago old	Blue	Limburger
Cheddar	Brick	Monterey, Monterey Jack
Gruyere	Caciocavallo Siciliano	Muenster
Parmesan and Reggiano	Colby (not more than 40% moisture)	Pasteurized process cheese
Romano	Edam	Provolone
Sap sago	Gorgonzola	Roquefort, sheep's milk blue-mold
		Swiss and Emmentaler

Spotlight on the Sanitarian

Kelli Pleasant



Kelli has been with the GCHD for over 8 years. For the last year she has been the Department's HACCP Trainer. Before, her routine inspection area was Flint Township and part of the City of Flint.

The HACCP (**H**azard **A**nalysis **C**ritical **C**ontrol **P**oint) Program is a risk-based food safety management system developed by food service establishments to ensure food safety. Kelli's role as the Health Department's HACCP Trainer is to help you develop a HACCP food safety plan tailored to fit your specific needs.

HACCP looks at the entire flow of food from receiving and storage to preparation and service. A HACCP food safety plan allows the food service operator to monitor and document food temperatures during the cooking, cooling, hot holding, cold holding and reheating processes so that the end result is safe food. The food safety plan also establishes procedures for cleaning, maintenance, personal hygiene, receiving and storing supplies and especially employee training.

In addition to her responsibilities as HACCP trainer, Kelli is one of the instructors for the monthly Food Workers' Classes held at the Health Department. She also conducts routine food service inspections as needed for sanitarians on leave.

Kelli also represents Genesee, Shiawassee and Livingston counties in the Southeast Michigan Environmental Health Association. She has a BS in Biology from Langston University in Oklahoma where she is originally from. Kelli and her husband have three children and reside in the City of Flint.

Remember the Temperature Danger Zone

2002 Health Department Fees

The State of Michigan had a huge budget shortfall in 2001. To balance its budget, the state legislature reduced local public health operating grants. That means it cut the money it gives to local health departments. To avoid layoffs and eliminating programs, the Genesee County Commissioners raised all health department fees by 5% in September 2001. In addition, Environmental Health fees are adjusted every year according to the consumer price index, which meant a 2.7% increase in February 2002.

Your GCHD Food Staff

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If your operation is in the city of Flint, contact our office for your area sanitarian.