

Food for Thought

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Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

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NEWS FLASH
Food Act 2008 & regulations to be introduced on 23rd October 2009
Watch for further information shortly

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Introduction

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Food for Thought Newsletter. This publication contains the latest interesting news related to food throughout Australia and updates of recent events and work being undertaken within the Food Unit.

Chicken Wrap Listeria Outbreak



A public health alert was triggered this year following the premature births of two babies and five other reported incidence of food poisoning from *Listeria monocytogenes*. These incidences of Listeriosis were linked to the consumption of chicken wraps served on Virgin Blue flights departing Brisbane. Virgin Blue removed the chicken wrap from their in-flight menu at the end of June and investigations continued to determine the source of the contamination

Queensland Health in co-operation with Virgin Blue Airlines promptly investigated the outbreak and established that the source of the contamination was a chicken manufacturer supplying cooked, diced chicken to the Virgin caterer who produced the wraps.

Public media statements highlighting the potential for a long incubation period of up to 70 days were released to alert vulnerable populations to the health risks of Listeriosis.

The manufacturer involved was immediately issued a prohibition order which prohibited the company from producing the chicken product or any other ready-to-eat product. It will remain in place until further notice.

For further information on this outbreak please visit <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/media-releases/mr-19-Aug-09-source-virgin-blue-contaminated-food/>

WA Food Regulation Update

The Food Act 2008

It is anticipated that the *Food Act 2008* (the Act) will be proclaimed by the end of October 2009. It is also the DOH's intention to delay the introduction of Part 8, Division 2 on Auditing. However, it is the finalising of the food regulations which will ultimately be the deciding factor on the date of proclamation of the Act.

Facts sheets will soon be distributed to local government that provide the DOH's recommended approach to Act implementation matters.

Following feedback from the regional workshops, a local government "checklist" highlighting expectations of what should be done with food businesses will soon be distributed. In addition, guidance on temporary food businesses is being prepared for distribution to local government.

Workshops

Ongoing interactive workshops on the Act have been taking place throughout the regions and in the Perth Metropolitan area. These workshops have been well attended and the feedback received has been positive. A copy of the workshop presentation is available on our website at http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/936/2/food_act_presentations.pm

Audit Training

DOH organised two auditing run by SAI Global. The first course was held in Perth on 15-19 June 2009 and the second in Bunbury from the 22-26 June 2009. While the DOH facilitated each course, participants contributed to the cost of tuition. Both courses were fully subscribed and further courses may be offered in the future depending on interest. Expressions of interest should be lodged with the Sally Newbury (9388 4909 sally.newbury@health.wa.gov.au) from the Food Unit.

WA Food Alliance Working Group

In March 2009, the DOH established a Western Australian Food Alliance (WAFA) to provide input into the development of the food regulations, its unpinning policies and associated procedures. Members include the DOH, four local government nominated representatives and two Western Australian Local Government Association nominees. It is anticipated that the WAFA role will include the resolution of other food matters of interest to local government in the future.

The Draft Food Regulations

Draft 12 of the new Food Regulations to support the Act has been received from Parliamentary Counsel. The imminent repeal of food related subsidiary legislation created under the *Health Act 1911* (including the *Health (ANZ Food Standards Code Adoption) Regulations 2001*, *Health (Food Standards) (Administration) Regulations 1986*, *Health (Pet Meat) Regulations 1990*, *Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations 1993*, and *Health (Meat Hygiene) Regulations 2001*) is gathering momentum.

The food regulations will be mainly administrative in nature and do not resemble the *Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations 1993*. The Act requires food businesses to comply with the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code). Chapter 3 of the Code - Food Safety Standards – is where the fit-out, construction, food handling and hygiene requirements are outlined.

Interesting Food Events

Food Rates Highly on Public Health Website

Recent data showing the number of hits on the Public Health Website (www.public.health.wa.gov.au) has revealed that the Publication of Names of Offenders was the most commonly viewed page on the whole site for the latest monthly reporting period. Food in general and the Food Industry page came in at 5th and 6th respectively, falling in just behind Swine Flu and the general A-Z topic page.



Filleted Blowfish

In May research officers were shocked to discover a filleted blow fish (below) in a bin at the Geraldton marina. It raised concerns that an amateur fisher may have taken the fillets home for consumption.

The blow fish is a highly toxic fish and the Department of Fisheries reminded the public of an incident two years ago where a foreign iron-ore crew member died from consuming this type of fish

For further information visit:

<http://www.abc.net.au>



Fact Sheet 1: Food Prepared in Residential Premises

Fact Sheet 1: Food Prepared in Residential Premises was recently circulated to Local Governments for information. The Fact Sheet refers to the relative risk of the proposed food preparation activities and can be viewed at:

http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/959/2/food_prepared_in_residential_premises.pm

To enable Local Governments to adequately assess the food safety risk, applications to produce food in a residential premise should include the following information (at minimum):

- Evidence of accurate shelf life calculations – a certificate of analysis by a laboratory will be required if no reputable evidence is provided.
- Complete list of ingredients and proposed source of these ingredients

- Methods or recipe including cooking times/temperatures
- Details of information to be put on the label
- Details of packaging materials
- Written food recall plan
- Details of compliance with Skills and Knowledge requirement of the Code

Applicants should be made aware that the approval to produce food in a residential premise is not an indication that their product will comply with the requirements of the Code. For example, it is the applicant's responsibility, not Local Government's, to ensure that the nutritional information panel and ingredients list are accurate. Applicants should also be made aware that their product will be subject to routine compliance sampling.

17th Annual Canteen Conference & Healthy Choice Food Expo



On the 17th July 2009, over 600 delegates from school canteens across Western Australia and invited guests attended the 17th Annual Canteen Conference & Healthy Choice Food Expo.

The keynote speaker Ms Catherine Saxelby identified '10 Mega Trends' in children's eating habits, nutritional problems for canteen managers and identified some contentious issues in her presentation; 'Keeping School Food Healthy in a Junk Food World'.

Other speakers included Ms Margery Evans (Department of Education & Training), Ms Maurice Swanson (Heart Foundation)

and Mr Terry Mazzucchelli (Food Unit-Environmental Health Directorate, pictured left).

Terry's talk covered:

- the progress and implementation of the Act
- importance of the Code
- the process of notification and registration of food businesses
- the responsibilities of food canteen managers to communicate with local government
- examples on fund raising activities and functions

As a result of Terry's presentation on the Act many school canteen managers visited and selected pamphlets on food safety from the Food Unit's booth at the Healthy Choice Food Expo and Health Professional Displays.

Presenting at this conference brought the Act to the attention of canteen managers and the importance of the Code for food businesses. It also gave delegates an opportunity to acquire further information and resources.

"Gold Plate Award" finalist announced for 2009

On Monday the 6th July 2009, The Catering Institute of WA announced the 94 finalists in the Gold Plate Awards. Restaurateurs choose to register in one or more of the 32 award categories. The Family Dining Award includes specific criteria for children's menus and the Excellence in Health Award is selected from all the categories. These two awards are sponsored by Department of Health WA. The finalists announced at the July event have been judged as being the top establishments in their chosen category.

Judging will continue throughout the next few months to select the winners of each category and will result in the selection of the prestigious Prix d'Honneur Award. Winners of the Prix d'Honneur Award have won 3 Gold Plates in consecutive years, in the same category and have maintained their standards throughout.

On October 19th 2009, winners of all Gold Plate Awards will be announced at a gala presentation dinner. We look forward to congratulating the winners.

Is Chinese Style Roast Duck Safe?



Chinese style roast duck is a popular ethnic dish that is available in Western Australia. These ducks are traditionally hung in the windows of the food businesses who offer them for sale. The Code allows food businesses to maintain the temperature of food above 5°C and below 60°C if they are able to demonstrate that the time the food is held out of temperature control will not adversely affect the microbiological safety of the food.

Information from the Victorian Department of Health indicates the preparation process involves soaking the duck in boiling water with added vinegar for a short while before it is hung up to dry in a well ventilated, cool area. Boiling is an effective method in reducing the number of bacteria on the duck. Vinegar acts to lower the pH and drying reduces the water activity on the skin with both these steps reducing the ability of bacteria to grow on the skin. After being left to dry for up to 6 hours, the duck is then roasted in an oven.

If the duck is left to dry for longer than 6 hours, this increases the risk of bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* being able to replicate and produce toxins which are not destroyed by the cooking process.

In order to effectively demonstrate that these products are safe, food businesses are required to have the appropriate skills and knowledge to satisfy enforcement agencies that they can produce safe food.

They must be able to demonstrate that the risks associated with keeping foods out of temperature control have been identified and effective processes are in place to manage the risks. If food businesses can not demonstrate such controls are in place, they must keep food below 5°C and above 60°C at all times.

Sampling undertaken by various Local Governments in Western Australia recently confirmed there are relatively low bacterial loads on these types of products.

The Victorian Department of Health produced a supplement for inclusion in Food Safety Programs for businesses that produce these types of products. Although Food Safety Programs are not required for these types of food businesses in Western Australia, such businesses are required to demonstrate the heating and cooling processes being used are safe as detailed in clause 25 of Standard 3.2.2 of the Code.

The Victorian supplement may be utilised by food businesses in Western Australia to demonstrate safe food is being produced and can be found at:-

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/downloads/chinese_%20style_roast_duck.pdf

For food safety inquiries please contact the Food Unit on:

Ph: (08) 9388 4999 or email: foodunit@health.wa.gov.au

Thoughts, comments and topic suggestions are also welcomed.