

# Food for Thought

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## Contact Details:

For contributions, enquiries or feedback regarding the newsletter, please feel more than welcome to contact a member of the Team.

Ph: (08) 9388 4999

Fax: (08) 9382 8119

Email:

[foodunit@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:foodunit@health.wa.gov.au)

## Introduction

Welcome to the festive fifth issue of the Food for Thought Newsletter. This issue includes: Christmas food safety; recent food poisoning outbreaks; the implementation of the *Food Act 2008*; website updates; and past and upcoming food events.

The Food Unit wishes you a happy, safe Christmas and New Year

## Food Safety during the Silly Season



Entertaining and cooking for more people during the holidays can increase the risk of food poisoning. Good hygiene practices and planning are essential to ensure food safety in the fun festive season.

**Wash your hands** before commencing food preparation, after handling raw meats, going to the toilet or doing any other activity that may contaminate your hands

**Avoid cross contamination** and prepare and store raw meat separately from cooked and ready to eat foods such as salad and cooked chicken. Items such as tongs, chopping boards and knives used on raw meats should be washed before being used to handle ready to eat foods

**Cook foods thoroughly** and ensure the juices of meats such as chicken and minced meat products run clear after cooking. It is recommended a thermometer be used to ensure a minimum core temperature of 75°C.

**Enough fridge/freezer space** is important as overloading will reduce cooling efficiency. If refrigeration is not available, keep risky foods cool by using portable car fridges, insulated cool/hot boxes or eskies with plenty of ice. Low risk items such as cool drinks, alcohol and water can be kept in eskies to free up refrigerator space.

**Keep food out of the temperature danger zone** (between 5 °C and 60 °C). Place food to cool in the fridge as soon as it stops steaming

**Portion food before cooling** by slicing meats, cutting large poultry into smaller portions and place liquid foods such as casseroles in shallow containers (no more than 5cm deep) to enhance cooling

**Refrigerate leftover food** as soon as possible and if reheating, reheat until steaming hot. Do not leave cooked food at room temperature for more than two hours

**Christmas ham** will keep several weeks with proper handling. Remove it from its plastic wrap, cover with a clean cloth soaked in water and vinegar, so it doesn't dry out, and store it in the fridge at or below 5°C

## Food Bourne Outbreak Successfully Solved

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### Salmonella saintpaul and Pawpaw



*Horticulturalist Harvesting Pawpaw*

In August 2009 the Food Unit was notified by OzFoodNet WA of several cases of Salmonella saintpaul. Epidemiological investigations indicated several cases had consumed papaya (pawpaw). Using this information, Food Unit officers conducted sampling of implicated outlets. In addition, sampling was undertaken at the Canning Vale Markets with the cooperation of wholesalers.

Results from the samples submitted to PathWest indicated a particular farm was implicated in the outbreak. A trade level recall was conducted of the supplier's product.

### Hepatitis A in Semi-dried Tomatoes

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West Australians were recently warned not to eat loose semi-dried tomatoes following an increase in hepatitis A cases in Victoria. Six Western Australians had been diagnosed with hepatitis A since September, three of which had reported eating semi-dried tomatoes.

Bottled semi-dried tomatoes are considered not to be affected as they are heat-treated. Only loose semi-dried tomatoes are implicated.

Concurrently a media release advised the public to wash fruit and vegetables prior to consuming.

The Food Unit sent an officer to the horticultural region and with the assistance of the local council EHO conducted a risk assessment of the particular farm.

The horticulturist was very cooperative and with the combined efforts of all, a probable point of contamination was identified.

A clean up program was implemented and further sampling was conducted resulting in intermittent positives being detected.

Further adjustments to the farm processes were introduced and subsequent testing of produce indicated no further contamination. The produce was then cleared for market.

This successful outcome would not have been achieved in such a timely manner had it not been for the cooperation between all the parties involved.

A take away message from this episode is that the "paddock to plate" concept requires to be closely monitored to ensure horticultural practices are aligned to safe food practices by using only potable water sources as a last contact with produce prior to dispatch to market.

It is recommended that loose sourced semi-dried tomatoes be cooked to a minimum of 90° for four minutes.

Symptoms of hepatitis A can include fever, nausea, poor appetite, abdominal discomfort, dark urine and jaundice (yellowing of a person's skin and eyes). The symptoms can develop between two and seven weeks after exposure and can continue for several weeks. Health authorities Australia-wide are working to identify the possible source of the contamination.

## Food Unit Updates

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### **Food Act 2008 Update**

The *Food Act 2008* (the Act) received Royal Assent on 8 July 2008. Sections one and two of the Act came into effect immediately with the remainder of the Act being proclaimed on 23 October 2009 (except Part 8 'Auditing' which has been delayed until 23 October 2010).

The Act is the principal piece of legislation regulating the sale of food in Western Australia and provides food safety regulation across the entire food supply chain – from paddock to plate. The Act covers a wide range of food safety issues, to maintain consumer confidence about the safety of what they are buying and eating.

The Act applies to everyone involved in the sale of food in WA. This new legislation provides greater opportunity for food businesses to demonstrate compliance with food safety.

The Act adopts the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Food Standards Code) which covers cleanliness, sanitation, hygiene, food serving practices and a whole range of other aspects that go into the preparation and provision of food.

The *Food Regulations 2009* (the Regulations) came into operation on 23 October 2009. The Regulations provide the necessary administrative framework for applying the Act.

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### **Publication of Names of Offenders**

The Food Unit has recently published a policy relating to the management of the Publication of Names of Offenders Webpage. The policy was approved by the Chief Executive Officer in October and defines the responsibilities of the Department of Health WA (DOH) and enforcement agencies in relation to sections 121(2) and 143 of the *Food Act 2008*.

Details of prosecutions have been available to the public in the past. However the requirement for enforcement agencies to notify the DOH of such convictions allows members of the public easier access to this information.

Details of prosecutions will remain on the website for a period of 24 months, unless the enforcement agency provides the DOH with adequate justification to support the early removal of the conviction.

To view the policy, webpage and related documents please visit [http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/825/2/publication\\_of\\_names\\_of\\_offenders.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/825/2/publication_of_names_of_offenders.pm)

### **Food Unit Auditing**

The Food Unit conducts audits on meat, dairy and state hospital premises. Poultry, red meat, pork, rabbits and game meat from abattoirs, boning rooms and smallgoods premises are included in the audits. Meat premises need to comply with the Food Standards Code and the relevant Australian Standards such as AS 4696: 2007 Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption. Game meat, rabbit and poultry have their own Australian Standard.

The Food Unit also audits dairy premises; farms and factories. The enactment of Part 8 of the Act will require the Food Unit to also audit state hospitals and other state-owned food business which provide food for vulnerable persons.

Other hospitals/food businesses will be audited by local government and must have Food Safety Programs in place (since 23 October 2008). Auditing will commence in October 2010; when Food Act Part 8 is proclaimed.

The Food Unit also conducts food premises assessments on Crown Lands such as Kings Park and Rottnest Island.

## Recent Food Events

### Gold Plate Winners 2009



*Dr Tarun Weeramanthri presenting the 'Family Dining' award to Gnarabar – Margaret River*

The annual Catering Industry of Western Australia Gold Plate Awards were held at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2009. All finalists were assessed against nutrition and food safety criteria and it is encouraging to observe industry being proactive in relation to food safety. Two awards are sponsored by the Department of Health and the Food Unit congratulates Scusi Restaurant, Halls Head, for winning the 'Excellence in Health' award and the Gnarabar, Margaret River, for the 'Family Dining' award.

### Implementation Sub-committee

The Department of Health WA played host to the Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC), held in Fremantle on 4, 5 and 6 November 2009. There was a busy agenda. Stan Goodchild, Manager of the Food Unit, took the opportunity to introduce the Food Unit Team to ISC members.

ISC is a sub committee of the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC). Its role is to develop and oversee a consistent approach across jurisdictions on implementation and enforcement of food regulations and standards.

ISC meetings are held quarterly throughout the year, the host venue generally being shared among State, Territory and New Zealand representatives.

### Stakeholders' Seminars on Food Act 2008 Update

Interactive workshops on the *Food Act 2008* (the Act) have taken place throughout the run-up to the introduction to the Act. The workshops at various regional locations and in the metropolitan area have been well attended and received.

The workshops have been delivered to a wide variety of stakeholders including Environmental Health Officers, Para-professionals, Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) members, Aged Care and Canteen Association members etc. The most recent workshops were held in November 2009.

Additional subject specific workshops are planned for 2010 for local government (e.g. WA Food Safety Auditor Framework, Compliance and Enforcement Framework). Workshops for other stakeholders (e.g. industry) are being developed. A calendar of events will soon be available on our website.

### 'Healthy Vincent'

The Town of Vincent recently proposed a 'Healthy Vincent' policy to identify the health and wellbeing needs of the community and to align their strategies with broader Federal and State Government public health initiatives. [http://www.vincent.wa.gov.au/2/715/1/policy\\_healthy\\_vincent.pm](http://www.vincent.wa.gov.au/2/715/1/policy_healthy_vincent.pm). Please contact [foodunit@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:foodunit@health.wa.gov.au) if interested in developing this type of policy.

### Trans Fatty Acid Strategy

In 2006 FSANZ undertook a review of trans fatty acids (TFA) in the New Zealand and Australian food supply; considering potential risks posed by TFA dietary intakes. See below link for report <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/publications/transfattyacidsreport4484.cfm>

## Newest Website Documents

The Food section of the Public Health website is constantly being updated with new, relevant documents, templates and information for the benefit of local government, industry, consumers and all other users.

### Tools for Local Government

This page has been developed to assist local government in the implementation of the *Food Act 2008*. This page contains:

- Implementation checklist for local government
- Template letter to food businesses on the *Food Act 2008*
- Food business risk profiling tool
- Notification/registration form
- Certificate of registration of a food business
- Guideline on the appointment of authorised officers

[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1002/3/implementation\\_of\\_the\\_food\\_act\\_tools\\_for\\_local\\_g.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1002/3/implementation_of_the_food_act_tools_for_local_g.pm)

### Food Unit Notices

New Food Unit Notices have been posted on the website. Topics include: the *Food Act 2008*; Publication of Names of Offenders; Auditing Food Safety Plans and Registration of the Dairy Sector; Folic Acid Fortification of Wheat Flour; and Non-conforming Meat or Meat Products.

[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/948/2/food\\_unit\\_notices.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/948/2/food_unit_notices.pm)

### Food Unit Communiqué

The most recent communiqué outlines the 'Food Act 2008 and Parents and Citizens' Associations'.

[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/946/2/food\\_unit\\_communiqes.pm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/946/2/food_unit_communiqes.pm)

### Food Act 2008 Fact Sheet 2

This fact sheet outlines the registration of a food business and is located under the 'What's new' section

[http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/1/50/2/food\\_fm](http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/1/50/2/food_fm)

## Timetable of Upcoming Events

Past Events	Location	Title	Dates	Topics Covered
Half Day Environmental Health Seminar	Grace Vaughan House Perth	Environmental Health Seminars	27 Nov 2009	Public building issues & extended trading permits. Mosquito & mosquito-borne disease risk assessment. Hydrogen Sulphide & Public Health in WA
Future Events	Location	Title	Dates	Topics Covered
One Week Auditing Workshop	Tradewinds Hotel Fremantle	Lead Auditor in Food Safety Management Systems	15 – 19 Feb 2010  March 2010	Covering all auditing competencies required for approval in WA as a regulatory food auditor under the <i>Food Act 2008</i>
Full Day Environmental Health Seminar/Workshop	Grace Vaughan House Perth	What Could or Should Local Government do to Address Obesity: Lessons from the EU	26 March 2010	How Local Government can tackle health with examples from the European Union. Current research examples and case studies from Australian Local Governments. Hands on workshop with international expert on ideas for addressing obesity.

For food enquires please contact the Food Unit on:

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Thoughts, comments and topic suggestions are also welcomed.