

SAFE SUSHI

Sushi has become a very popular alternative to the traditional cheese and pickle sandwich. Dunedin has several sushi bars, but sushi also seems to be appearing in dairies, sandwich bars and other establishments.

The preparation of sushi involves considerable handling of raw and cooked foods, giving plenty of opportunities for food to become contaminated. In addition the high water and protein contents provide a good growth environment for bacteria. Be sure to avoid contamination by taking special care when making sushi. All work surfaces and utensils should be sanitised before use. It is not possible to thoroughly clean or sanitize the bamboo mats and these should be replaced regularly. Alternatively you may cover the mat with clingfilm, and change this frequently.

Thorough hand washing before commencing preparation and in between different tasks is vital. If you choose to use disposable gloves ensure that these are changed when moving from handling one type of food to another.

Growth of pathogens in the rice portion of sushi is controlled by acidification. To prevent growth of Salmonella, Staphylococcus and other pathogens it is important that the pH is lowered to 4.6 or below. This can be achieved by using standard recipes see <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/pdf/sushi-guidelines-eng.pdf> for example, but it is advisable to check (and record) the pH of each batch of rice, adding extra vinegar if required. Testing pH does not need to be expensive, pH strips are easy to use and cheap, although not as accurate as a digital pH meter. Rice should be acidified as soon as possible after cooking – cooling it in shallow containers with help bring it down to room temperature quicker.

Use reputable suppliers for your filling ingredients and ensure these are in good condition when you receive them. All vegetables must be washed and meat and poultry cooked thoroughly. Only use sashimi grade tuna or other fish if it is to be served raw.

Although the acidity of the rice prevents growth of pathogens in rice, this does not mean that bugs can't grow happily in the fillings. As a result temperature control is important. Rice must be cooled to 15°C before rolling. Once made up sushi can be stored at up to 12°C for up to 8 hours, but be sure to keep produce out of direct sunlight.

If you do not make your own sushi, but buy it in pre-made you must ensure that the delivered product is cold and has been transported in such a way as to prevent contamination. Ask your supplier how they make their sushi – do they check the acidity of their rice? where do they get their fish from? etc.



meet the BUGS

Listeria monocytogenes

The invasive disease – **Listeriosis** – caused by infection with this bacterium is rare in New Zealand, however where it does occur the consequences are severe. The hospitalisation rate is approximately 92% and the death rate around 30% – in other words nearly all those who get ill will end up in hospital and a third will die! Infection results in flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills, headache and backache. Babies, young children, pregnant women, people over 65 years, and those with compromised immune systems are more likely to develop listeriosis

and also to experience severe complications, such as blood infections, meningitis and miscarriage.

Listeria is a normal inhabitant of animal intestines and can also be found in soil. Hence all meat, raw milk and vegetables may be contaminated with the bacterium. The organism also exists throughout the environment, i.e. air, water, plant material and humans. In Europe Listeria is most commonly associated with soft cheese produced from raw milk, however in New Zealand all soft cheeses (except from the recently allowed Roquefort) are made from pasteurised milk. However contamination can occur post pasteurisation and soft cheeses can be the source of infection. Other foods commonly associated with Listeria are ready-to-eat-salads, ready-to-eat-meats and seafood, and ice-cream. Unlike other pathogens Listeria can grow at temperatures as low as minus 1.5°C, so it can be happily multiplying in your refrigerator.

You can reduce the risk of infecting your customers by keeping foods refrigerated below 4°C where growth is slower and by good stock control of ready-to-eat foods. In addition cross-contamination can be avoided by thorough cleaning and sanitisation, and scrupulous personal hygiene.



DUNEDIN CITY
COUNCIL
Kaunihera-a-rohe o Otepoti
ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH

IN THIS ISSUE

- WHERE DO YOUR EGGS COME FROM?
- SAUCY STUDY
- CATERING FOR THE UNKNOWN
- FOOD HYGIENE TRAINING UPDATE
- PROPOSED FEES INCREASE
- TRANSITION TEST IS MORTALLY WOUNDED
- SAFE SUSHI
- MEET THE BUGS - *Listeria monocytogenes*

welcome!

.....to issue 39 of the Safe Food Newsletter. We hope you all had a great Christmas and wish you a successful New Year.

Over the past couple of years we have been trying to prepare you for the changes that will be implemented as a result of the Domestic Food Review. We have been encouraging temperature monitoring, written cleaning schedules, date marking etc because they are a good idea, but also because they will be a requirement under the FCPs (Food Control Plans) that all food premises will be required to implement.

It was anticipated that the Food Bill would be enacted in time for the 5 year roll-out of FCPs to start in July 2008. However as the Food Bill has to date not been introduced to Parliament it will not be enacted in time. The NZFSA is now looking at the option of amending the current legislation to allow voluntary adoption of FCPs for food premises in the food service and catering sectors. If you are keen to get ahead, implement a FCP and become exempt from the Food Hygiene Regulations make sure you keep an eye on these developments. For more information have a look at the NZFSA website www.nzfsa.co.nz



Where do your eggs come from?

All eggs sold must be from an egg producer that has a registered risk management programme (RMP). Although small egg producers – those with 100 or fewer female birds – are exempt from the requirement to have an RMP, their eggs must be sold directly to the consumer/end user. This means that they cannot sell their eggs to dairies or butchers to be sold on, nor may they sell them to cafes, restaurants, etc.

Ask to see a copy of your suppliers RMP certificate or alternatively you can search the RMP register at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/animalproducts/registers-lists/risk-management-programmes/index.htm>



SAUCY STUDY

Earlier this year Environmental Health carried out a survey of hollandaise sauce and mayonnaise made from raw shell eggs. Initially we looked at reported recent outbreaks linked to hollandaise sauce and mayonnaise and published research on the survival of pathogens. We collected samples of both products and had these analysed for indicators and coagulase positive staphylococci. We also looked at the recipes and storage conditions in the various food premises.

Whilst there have been numerous outbreaks overseas, some affecting large numbers of people, only a few outbreaks have been linked to raw egg products in New Zealand. The growth of contaminating bacteria is controlled by acidity in hollandaise sauce and mayonnaise. Vinegar and/or lemon juice is used to lower the pH so that conditions are unfavourable for pathogens. We found that a number of studies had developed a standard ratio of yolks to volume of acid: to achieve the required pH level 20ml vinegar or at least 20ml, but preferably 35ml, lemon juice must be used per egg yolk.



Interestingly much of the research shows that storing mayonnaise at refrigeration temperatures actually protects Salmonella and Staphylococci. These pathogens appear to be inactivated by the acidity faster if stored at room temperature. Hence it is recommended that mayonnaise is stored at ambient temperature for 24-72 hours before refrigeration.

No published research was found on the effects of storage temperature on hollandaise sauce, but as the ingredients are very similar to mayonnaise there are likely to be similarities. Environmental Health recommends that hollandaise can be stored warm, but that the storage time should be limited to 4 hours.

We were very pleased to find that microbiological results for all the samples we collected in local food premises were acceptable and none of the samples breached guideline values.

FOOD HYGIENE TRAINING UPDATE

The Food Safety Bylaw requires that all food handlers have some food hygiene training. The minimum requirement is part one (theory only) of unit standard 167. Until recently it has been possible to take this course at the Otago Polytechnic without having to sit part two (the practical part) of unit standard 167. However, due to changes in government funding the Polytechnic will now **only** be offering part one of the course in conjunction with part two.

This means that although part one is sufficient to fulfil the requirement of the Bylaw food handlers will need to complete both parts to obtain the qualification if they do the course through the Otago Polytechnic.



Proposed Food Premises Fees Increase from 1 July 2008

Currently the council subsidises food premises health license fees by 65% from rates revenue, the remaining 35% is revenue from licensing fees. The Council recognises that there is an element of "public good" in the enforcement of food hygiene standards in the city however the prime beneficiary is now seen as being the food premise operator. For this reason the current funding policy has been revised by the Council.

Following the approval of the 2008/09 Annual Plan the proposed fees from food premises will be subsidised by 45% from rates revenue and the remaining 55% will be from licensing fees. This will mean a proposed increase in food premises fees of 55%.

CATERING FOR THE UNKNOWN

It is the season of Events – weddings, fairs, festivals, markets abound. Catering for large numbers of people outside of your own premises brings with it an array of issues where food safety can break down. These include preparing larger than usual volumes of food and possibly part-cooking food, which has to be transported to another location, where it is reheated or further prepared. The kitchen may be new to you or may even be a temporary kitchen. You may be employing temporary staff whose standards of hygiene you are not sure of, and then there are the customers and the environment, which can both be the source of contamination of your food. Control of these hazards follows the usual principles: temperature control, staff training, protection from contamination by equipment, other food, staff and the environment, etc.

Food must be chilled quickly and stored cold, or be held hot, whilst it is being transported and stored. Reheating must occur quickly and to sufficiently high temperatures. Any large joints of meat should be temperature probed to verify that they are cooked all the way through. To ensure that you are in control from beginning to end it is important you have thought of all steps involved in the event, that you know what you are dealing with (Does the outside kitchen have sufficient refrigeration space, work space, hand washing facilities? Is it going to be clean?), are you prepared for all eventualities (What if the generator breaks down? What if it rains?) and that you can rely on your staff.

Norovirus outbreaks are often linked to large food events. In many cases the food is not the original source of the illness, but one of the customers may bring the virus and share it around. You can do your bit to prevent this from happening by providing hand sanitizers, sufficient tongs, spoons etc for customers to use. Staff should be available to assist and to help prevent contamination of food by customers. Have a procedure and equipment in place for cleaning up vomit, isolating contaminated areas and disposing of potentially contaminated food.

Finally be sure to know your limits and stay within your capabilities, have a back-up plan and keep a paper trail.



TRANSITION TEST IS MORTALLY WOUNDED

Since 31 March 2006, everyone applying to renew their Manager's Certificate has had to supply a copy of their Licence Controller Qualification. There were a large number of you who applied prior to March 2006 before the requirement to have LCQ became the law and were granted a special offer renewal of two years.

You will now need to apply to renew your Manager's Certificate and this time you will need to have gained the Licence Controller Qualification. For those of you that don't have the NZQA approved units 4646 and 16705, the option to gain LCQ by passing the Transition Test is going to cease on 10 March 2008.

Therefore, if you don't sit the Transition Test by 7 March, the only way that you are going to get your Manager's Certificate renewed is by passing units 4646 and 16705 at the Polytechnic or QSM.

Please note that the Liquor Licensing Authority (where we send applications that don't have LCQ) has no discretion to renew a Manager's Certificate if the applicant is not the holder of the LCQ.

Unfortunately, the Dunedin campus of Aoraki Polytechnic no longer offers the Transition Test therefore the Otago Polytechnic is your best option.