

Lakes Food Newsletter



Issue 23/ September 09

Welcome...

.....to the third issue of the Lakes Food Newsletter. We hope that you are finding some of the information in these newsletters useful and that you are making it available to your staff. In the last issue we gave you an update on how we were progressing with the proposed Food Safety Bylaw, which would introduce grading of food premises. Unfortunately the process has since come to a temporary standstill. Council has instructed us to stop working on this project until further notice, but we are hoping to continue with the project in the not too distant future.

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Beef - grind, mince or chop it and the rules change

There is a very common misconception that ground beef does not need to be cooked through and can be served pink or rare. Whilst the meat i.e. muscle is sterile the surface of cuts can become contaminated with pathogenic bacteria during slaughter and processing. These surface pathogens are destroyed when a piece of meat, such as a steak or joint, is cooked. However, grinding or mincing the meat spreads the contamination through the entire product. This means that the centre of foods made from minced or ground beef needs to be cooked.

There a number of pathogens that have been associated with food poisoning from ground meat products: Salmonella, Campylobacter, Clostridium perfringens, Shigella and more. However, the one most commonly making headlines is Escherichia coli O157:H7. This particular strain of E. coli produces a toxin which can have serious effects, particularly for children and the elderly. Typical symptoms include bloody diarrhoea, severe abdominal pain and vomiting, but infection can result in far more serious, potentially permanent or even fatal illness. Some cases develop Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS), where kidneys are attacked by the toxin, resulting in kidney dysfunction, seizures, coma and death.

E. coli O157:H7 was termed "the Hamburger Bug" after a devastating outbreak in the United States. Undercooked burgers were responsible for making hundreds of people sick and three children died of heart failure as a result of kidney disease. Some survivors lost organs, including colons and gall bladders.

To reduce the risk of food poisoning from your kitchen treat ground meat products with care – use separate utensils, thoroughly wash hands before and after handling, and thoroughly clean and sanitise equipment. Ensure that all ground meat products are cooked, so that juices are clear and not pink. If possible use a meat thermometer and look for an internal temperature of at least 75°C.



Important Food Control Plan (FCP) updates

The NZFSA has recently released Version 2 of the FCP for Food Service and Catering. Importantly the updates to Version 1 include sections to control the risks associated with private water supplies. This means that premises on private water supplies that were previously excluded can now participate in the voluntary implementation programme.

Of interest to premises already on the FCP will be the changes to the *Cooking poultry* section. The temperature chicken has to be cooked to has been reduced from 82°C to 75°C. In addition temperature/time combinations have been developed to allow for lower cooking temperatures allowing for alternative cooking techniques such as 'sous vide'- poultry can be cooked to 70°C for 2 minutes or 65°C for 10 minutes.

Other FCP additions allow for some of the more common traditional food practices. A section on sushi sets out controls that allow sushi to be stored above 4°C. Furthermore there are sections on the safe production of Chinese style roast duck and doner kebabs. More information, update packs and additions can be downloaded from the NZFSA website at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/policy-law/projects/domestic-food-review/food-control-plans/index.htm>

A number of local premises have been working hard on implementing a Food Control Plan in their business. Several premises are close to coming on board and applying for exemption from the Food Hygiene Regulations. At this stage the following local food businesses have tailored and fully implemented their FCP:

Caffe LaVina, Fishbone Bar & Grill, Treble Cone, Flame Bar & Grill, Winnies Gourmet Pizza Bar, Jumping Tangents, Novotel Queenstown Lakeside, The Roast, Queenstown Airport Café, Skyline Gondola Restaurant, Atlas, A-line Hotel, Redrock Bar & Café Queenstown, Glenorchy Hotel.

If you are keen to find out more and to work towards implementing a FCP in your business give Lakes Environmental a call on 4500300 or 4430006 and ask to speak to an Environmental Health Officer.

Fruit and vegetables - not so innocent

Unfortunately raw vegetables, berries and fruits are increasingly becoming implicated in food poisoning outbreaks. There have been some large outbreaks overseas in recent years, such as a Salmonella outbreak in the USA last year linked to fresh chilies, which made over 1250 people sick! Other fruit and vegetables that have caused outbreaks include alfalfa sprouts (Salmonella), lettuce (E. coli O157:H7), parsley (Shigella), strawberries (Hepatitis A), tomatoes (Salmonella) and the list goes on.

Fruit and vegetables can become contaminated by a number of routes. Farm animals such as chickens and cattle may have access to the area where produce is grown, and birds and other wildlife are also potential sources of contamination. Water used for irrigation may be untreated and can be carrying pathogens, and then there are the people and machinery involved in the harvest and shipping process.

To minimize the risk of food poisoning all produce that is going to be consumed raw should be thoroughly washed. This includes herbs, sprouts and spring onions, even if they are only being used as a garnish. Make sure you use a separate sink to the washing up sink or thoroughly clean and sanitise the area between uses.



Safe glove use

Wearing gloves during food preparation can be a useful practice, but there are some important points to be aware of. Glove use does not replace hand washing, but is an additional step that can be taken to protect food from contamination. Gloves are particularly useful when handling ready-to-eat foods, for example when making up sandwiches or sushi, where there is no further cook step. When mixing up batches of food by hand or when handling raw meat and poultry gloves will help protect hands from becoming excessively contaminated and prevent food from becoming lodged under fingernails etc.

However, one of the dangers of gloves is that they give food handlers a false sense of security – their hands feel clean and they feel no need to wash hands when moving from one task to another. Gloves must be changed every time a food handler touches their face, hair etc and every time they move from one job to another. Bacteria and viruses can become attached to gloves and will then be transferred to food, work surfaces, clothing and equipment.

It is also important to be aware that gloves are not completely impermeable which means that bacteria and viruses can pass through the gloves to and from hands, food, equipment



etc. Gloves are also easily damaged and even a pin-prick size hole increases the risk of microbes passing through the glove tremendously. Incorrectly fitting gloves can pose additional risks. A glove that is too big and baggy provides nooks and crannies for microbes to accumulate in, whereas wearing gloves that are too small will cause hands to sweat, creating an environment where bacteria are likely to multiply rapidly. So remember:

- * Wash hands before putting gloves on and after taking them off.
- * Wear gloves for specific tasks.
- * Change gloves regularly.
- * Replace damaged gloves immediately.
- * Supply gloves in the correct sizes for all staff.

Make sure you observe staff when they are wearing gloves – be vigilant and point out times when gloves need to be changed and hands washed. Remind staff that gloves are there to protect food and not to keep their hands clean.

Chilled food stock control

Effective stock rotation is an important part of your stock control and will help you minimize food wastage. Providing fresh food will also keep your customers happy. Generally food coming into your premises will be labeled with a "use by" or "best before date", but once packages are opened and food has been decanted into a container storage times become something you will need to take control of. This is particularly important for readily perishable foods, such as meat, poultry and fish products.

You also need to consider storage times for foods made up on the premises – sandwich fillings, pies, sauces, casseroles and so on. The easiest way to ensure that you know how long food has been in your fridge and which batch to use first is to date mark containers.

But what are safe storage times for perishable foods? How long you can safely store and use a food will vary depending on how fresh it was when it came to your premises, how it has been handled and stored etc. If possible follow the original date marking (best before/use by) or usage instructions (e.g. use within 3 days after opening). Where this is not available you may use other guidelines such as those below:

Uncooked meats	
Roasts, chops etc.	2-4 days
Ground/chopped	1-2 days
Sausages	1-2 days
Cooked meats	1-2 days
Bacon	6-7 days
Ham	3-4 days
Uncooked poultry	2-3 days
Cooked poultry	1-2 days
Raw fish	1-2 days
Egg whites/yolks	1-2 days
Egg dishes	3-4 days.