

Lakes Food Newsletter



Issue 9/April 10

Welcome.....

.....to another issue of the Lakes Food Newsletter. We are moving on with the Food Grading Bylaw! After some informal consultation and a further meeting with Council some minor changes have been made. The next step is for it to go to the next full Council meeting in May. If it is approved the formal consultation process starts. This is when submissions can be made by food premises operators and the public. We will notify you when the Bylaw becomes available for comment. Don't miss your chance to have a say, so make sure you read the proposed Bylaw thoroughly and make a submission, either with concerns you have or in support of the Bylaw if you are happy with it.

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Stop the invasion

It's that time of year again - colder temperatures are starting to drive mice to look for a nice place to stay and breed, and the lack of food available sends them in search of tasty tidbits. Don't wait until you see a mouse or mouse droppings before acting. It is much easier and more effective to be prepared and stop that first mouse from setting up camp.

Keep your yard clean and tidy. Cardboard boxes and other items may provide shelter and nesting spaces, so stack items in an orderly manner and remove recycling and rubbish regularly. Sweep up any food waste spillages immediately, before hungry rodents sniff them out. Wash out rubbish bins and ensure lids are always firmly closed. Inspect the premises for any holes or gaps around doors and windows, in walls, ceilings etc. Mice can squeeze through the tiniest space; a hole as small as the diameter of a pencil is enough. Seal any holes and block gaps to make access to the kitchen harder. Keep doors to the exterior closed as much as possible.

Place bait stations or traps in places that are likely to appeal to mice, for example around the hot water cylinder, under dry store shelving and underneath fridges. If using bait ensure that it is well contained and cannot contaminate your food or food contact surfaces. Traps should be set at a right angle to walls or surfaces as mice tend to travel along these.

Bait stations and traps must be regularly checked to see whether they need refilling, resetting or emptying. An empty bait station or a snapped trap is worse than useless as it gives you a false sense of security, leaving you in the belief that measures are in place, when in fact they are not. It is advisable to have a record or sketch of where bait stations and traps are placed so that staff know where to look for them. Alternatively you could use a professional contractor who will identify the best spots for traps and bait stations and can monitor these for you.

Should you come across evidence of mice, such as droppings or nibbled food, it is important that you take immediate action to remove contamination. Remove droppings and discard any nibbled food or food containers. Thoroughly clean and sanitise the area, any equipment, cans, containers etc. Mice dribble urine as they scurry along, so you should consider that any area where they have been has contaminated. Foods in porous packaging, such as paper bags or cardboard, may need to be discarded.

But hopefully, if you are proactive and make your premises unattractive and inaccessible to mice your kitchen will stay free from unwanted guests.



Local Food Control Plan milestone

There has been a strong uptake of the FCP in our district and an important milestone was celebrated earlier this year: our 50th premises to implement an FCP! To mark the occasion the 50th premises, the Post Office Cafe in Arrowtown, were presented with their certificates by Vanessa van Uden. Since then more premises have joined the voluntary programme and we have currently got 58 FCPs registered in the District and a number of other premises about to sign up. Now we are looking forward to meeting the 100 mark! If you are interested or have questions about how to get on board or about the Food Control Plan, please get in touch – we would love to help you! Call us on 450 0300 or email enquiries@lakesenv.co.nz

In photo left to right Mayor Vanessa van Uden, Adele and Graeme Begley (proprietors) and Sandro Lobao

Bacillus cereus— a frequent resident in your kitchen

Bacillus cereus is a bacterium that is widespread in the environment – soil, dust, air and water - and occurs naturally on most foods. It is a spore forming bacteria; when conditions are unfavourable the bacteria produces a dormant spore, which can withstand high temperatures or absence of water for prolonged periods. When conditions improve the spore becomes a viable cell which can grow and multiply, and produce a toxin.

There are two types of *Bacillus cereus*. The first produces a very heat stable toxin that causes vomiting. Onset of illness is quite rapid, typically 1-6 hours after eating contaminated food. Even temperatures of well over 100°C may not be sufficient to deactivate the toxin. This strain is more commonly associated with food poisoning incidents and grows particularly well in starchy foods, such as rice and pasta. Food poisoning is usually the result of too slower cooling and/or inadequate temperature control. Spores present on rice or noodles will not be destroyed in the initial cook step and can then germinate while the food is cooling down. If left in the danger zone (between 5-60°C) for too long the spores germinate into viable cells, multiply and produce their toxin. Reheating contaminated food, even to boiling point, will not destroy the toxin.

Optimum growth occurs at 30-37°C, so the worst thing to do with rice, noodle or pasta dishes is to keep them in a warm bain marie or similar. A recent outbreak of food poisoning was linked to *Bacillus cereus* in rice pudding that had been kept warm an extended period. But leaving these starchy foods out on the kitchen bench can also result in sufficient growth and toxin production to cause food poisoning. A recent outbreak of food poisoning was linked to *Bacillus cereus* in rice pudding that had been kept warm an extended period.

The second type of *Bacillus cereus* causes abdominal pain and watery diarrhoea. These strains produce a toxin after they have been ingested and symptoms are usually experienced 10-12 hours after food is consumed. This type of *Bacillus* is associated with a wide range of foods, from vegetables and salads to meat and casseroles.

Although *Bacillus* is present on many foods it generally occurs in low numbers. A large number of bacteria are required to cause infection, so food can easily be protected by ensuring it is stored at the correct temperatures (at or below 4°C, or above 60°C) and that it is cooled and reheated quickly. To grow bacteria need a food source, water, warmth and time. By controlling the temperature of food you are removing a vital ingredient for growth and ensuring that your food remains safe. Cool rice and noodles quickly and store them in the fridge. Don't have starchy foods out in your mis en place for unnecessary long periods of time and monitor the temperature of any food that is being held hot.



Tips for cooling food quickly:

- If making large batches of food, split these into smaller batches for cooling.
- Use shallow containers to increase the surface area, i.e. the amount of food in contact with air, so that heat can escape easily.
- Put containers on racks or otherwise elevate them so that they are ventilated from below.
- Stir food ever so often so that it cools evenly.

Tips for keeping hot food safe:

- Heat food thoroughly in the microwave or oven, or on the hob.
- Pre-heat your pie-warmer, bain marie, chaffing dish etc
- Keep food covered as much as possible.
- Frequently stir food to distribute heat throughout.
- Use a probe thermometer to regularly check the temperature is 60°C or preferably above.