

Food Safety Newsletter



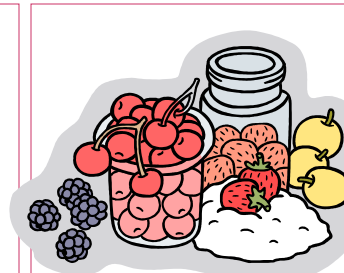
Food from Approved Sources

Foods used in a licensed food service operation (FSO) or retail food establishment (RFE) are required to come from an approved source. Approved sources include a licensed FSO or RFE, a commercial processing plant, a registered home bakery, and a cottage food production operation. The only food that does not fall under these requirements are fresh, unprocessed fruits and vegetables.

The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code does not allow any other home prepared foods to be used in a licensed facility. It states that food must be obtained from sources that comply with law. The only home produced foods that may be used in a licensed FSO or RFE may come from a home bakery, which must be registered by the Ohio Department of Agriculture or a cottage food production operation, which

may prepare non-potentially hazardous foods including jams, jellies, candies, home bakery products, and fruit butter. Honey and maple syrup may also be home-produced.

Hermetically sealed containers (canned food) must come from a processor that is inspected by a federal food safety regulatory agency or equivalent, the Ohio department of agriculture, or other recognized food regulatory agency of another state responsible for food safety. Canned foods, or foods in a hermetically sealed container, which are sealed at home may not be used or sold at a licensed FSO or RFE. A licensed FSO or RFE may not produce hermetically sealed containers unless it is regulated and inspected by a state regulatory agency. If canned goods from an unapproved source are



Home-canned foods are not an approved source and may not be used or produced in a food service operation or retail food establishment.

found in your facility you will be required to discard them. Canned goods are specifically noted because of the high risk of Botulism. When foods are not properly canned the anaerobic conditions make a perfect environment for the *Clostridium botulinum* bacterium to produce toxins. Botulism is a serious illness and it takes very little of the contaminated food to make a person seriously ill.

Improper Cooling Continues

Many of you probably groaned when you saw this headline. But cooling is still a common problem and I continue to discard food at your establishments because it is not cooled properly. Any time hot food is placed in a cold storage environment, whether the food was on a buffet or just cooked, care must be taken to ensure proper cooling. Foods must cool from 135°F to 70°F in 2 hours or less and then in a total of six hours the food must cool completely from 135°F to 41°F. Examples of

foods that are commonly cooled improperly include soups, large batches of cooked ground beef for taco meat, and roasts. Improper cooling allows for increased bacterial growth as the food spends more time in the temperature danger zone or the range from 41°F to 135°F. Hot foods placed in the cooler in tall containers or thick foods are commonly cooled improperly. Refer to the right of this article for tips on cooling.

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Tips on Cooling

- Use shallow metal pans and only place 2 inches of food in the pan.
- Pre-freeze the pan (metal only)
- Leave food uncovered until cool.
- ADD ICE. Many times you have to add water to soup when you re-heat it so add some ice before placing it in the cooler.
- Use an ice bath. Place the pan in a sink or larger container filled with ice and stir. This is a fairly fast and easy way to cool that reduces the risk of foodborne illness.
- Use a Rapi-Kool device or other clean container filled with water and frozen. Drop it in the hot food or use it to stir the food.
- DO NOT USE TALL OR PLASTIC CONTAINERS!

Date Marking of Products

If there are two containers of chili sauce in the cooler are you able to tell which one was made first? Maybe, if you're the only person who works in the kitchen. This isn't the case for the majority of food service operations or retail food establishments. Date marking is not only required by the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code, but also helps to save on waste in a FSO or RFE.

All potentially hazardous ready-to-eat foods must be dated to be used or discarded within seven days of preparation or opening. A recent letter of opinion from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio Department of Health stated that some commercially prepared foods are at a low risk and are exempt from date marking. Deli salads such as ham salad, seafood salad, chicken salad, egg salad, pasta salad, potato salad, and macaroni salad are not required to be dated **if they are commercially processed**. The manufacturer's use-by date should be followed. If there is no use-by date then use the seven day rule. Many products have a

sell-by date, but state that the product should be used within seven days of opening. The sell-by date may not be used for an expiration date once



opened.

All other potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat foods must be dated if not used within 24 hours of preparation. Products commonly not dated that are required to be include:

- ◇ Cooked pasta
- ◇ Sliced deli meat including un-sliced portion
- ◇ Thawed foods
- ◇ Soups

Cooking Temperatures

165°F- All poultry (chicken and turkey), stuffed foods, reheated foods

155°F- ground meats or fish, eggs cooked for hot holding, injected meats

145°F- seafood, whole cuts of meat, eggs cooked for immediate service

135°F- fruits and vegetables being cooked, food from a commercially processed, hermetically sealed container

Training employees is difficult and time consuming. Posters and informational literature such as this newsletter provide education and when posted are a constant reminder on proper food safety techniques. If you are interested in posters or food safety literature contact me or go to our website at www.vanwertcountyhealth.org. Also if you would be interested in hosting a food safety class it would be a great chance to train employees for free.

Reusing Single Use Items

Bread bags, pickle buckets, deli salad containers, and oil containers are many items that are considered single-use items. The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code states that "single-service or single-use items may not be reused." There are many issues with reusing items such as bread bags. For example, bread bags may have mold spores on the inside which may in turn contaminate the food you place in the bread bags.

Plastic grocery sacks may not be used for any direct food contact because they are not made for that purpose and may leach chemicals into food. In an article regarding the reuse of items the USDA states, "Plastic wrap, foam meat trays, convenience food dishes, and egg cartons have been approved for a specific

use and should be considered one-time-use packaging. Bacteria from foods that these packages once contained may remain on the packaging and thus be able to contaminate foods or even hands if reused."

Plastic utensils, plastic cups, and containers from cottage cheese, sour cream, chip dip, etc. are also not designed for multiple uses. They are not made to withstand repeated use or repeated cleaning. They also have edges and crevices which were not meant to be easily cleanable and may collect bacteria. When these items are reused they may begin to break down and possibly leach chemicals into food.

When any food container, whether approved for repeated use or not, has been



damaged or adapted for use by cutting it is no longer permitted to be used. Examples of this situation include cutting off jugs for food storage (such as jugs that cooking oil comes in), putting holes in a bowl to make a colander, or cutting a funnel to adapt it to fit a certain container. These items are no longer smooth and easily cleanable and are not permitted to be used in a licensed facility.