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M A T T E R S

No. 8

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE • SUMMER 2004

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This issue of Food Matters addresses:

- Cooling and Reheating Foods
- Hepatitis A outbreak
- Avian "Bird" Flu
- What do dates on a food product mean?
- A reminder about the new temperature requirement

COOLING AND REHEATING FOODS

Food items that have been cooked and held for later service must be rapidly cooled and then stored in a refrigerator until ready for use. This food must then be reheated rapidly before being served. Failure to rapidly cool and reheat these items may result in a foodborne illness. When foods are allowed to cool over a long period of time, bacteria are given the opportunity to grow and this may lead to illness. Improper cooling accounts for a significant amount of Foodborne illness in the United States of America.

The NYC Health Code requires that all potentially hazardous foods prepared for later service be cooled down rapidly. This means that in the first two hours of cooling, the foods must be cooled from 140°F to 70°F or less, and then go from 70°F to 41°F within an additional 4 hours. Since most of us find it

difficult to monitor all the items that have to be cooled, there are standards already established that you could use.

Rapid Cooling is especially difficult in foods such as large pieces of meat and thick foods such as chili and refried beans stored in deep pots. To ensure that these foods cool down in

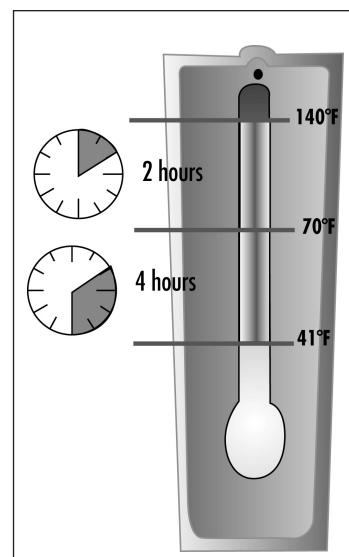
the required time one should monitor and document the cooling process. Take the temperature of the cooling food each hour to ensure that it is cooling within the required time. Start these measurements at 140°F.

It is a fact that smaller portions cool down faster than larger portions. Hence, to encourage faster cooling, roasts and other large cuts of meat should be cut into portions that average about 6 pounds. Thick foods like chili and refried beans should be poured out into shallow pans. In both these cases, there is more surface area and heat will escape faster.

Cooling must take place in the refrigerator or in an ice bath. Never cool foods down by simply leaving them out at room temperature.

The physics of Cooling is poorly understood by most kitchen staff. Foods do not cool

(Continued on next page)



COOLING AND REHEATING OF FOODS (CONTINUED)

at a constant rate. Hot food tends to cool relatively quickly while it is still very hot; the rate of cooling then slows greatly as the food cools down nearer the temperature of the refrigerator.

Many food workers will underestimate the amount of time it takes for foods to cool down. Under typical restaurant kitchen refrigeration, a one-gallon container of cooked meat may take up to 15 hours to cool down.

Established Methods to Assist Rapid Cooling

◆ Foods may be cooled in a refrigerator or in an ice bath. They should never be allowed to cool while stored at room temperature, for example, being left out on top of a counter.

◆ Cut large pieces of meat into smaller pieces, no larger than 6 pounds, such small portions will be able to cool rapidly. Larger pieces will take longer to cool.

◆ Do not cool foods in large deep pots. Pour out the contents of large containers into much smaller ones or into shallow pans at depth no greater than 2 inches.

◆ An ice bath can be made up by filling a sink or other large container with ice

and a little water. The stirring can be done with an ice paddle since this will speed up the cooling. *Also do not forget to replace the ice as it melts away*

◆ Metal containers such as stainless steel or aluminum are great conductors of heat. These are very useful in aiding cooling.

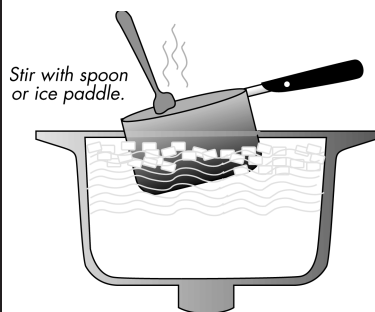
◆ Foods in the process of cooling must be kept uncovered; this will hasten the cooling process. Replace the cover after the food is cold enough.

◆ A common mistake is to overload refrigeration units by placing too much hot food in them. This reduces the efficiency of the unit drastically. In order not to overload refrigeration units, use an ice bath for freshly cooked foods.

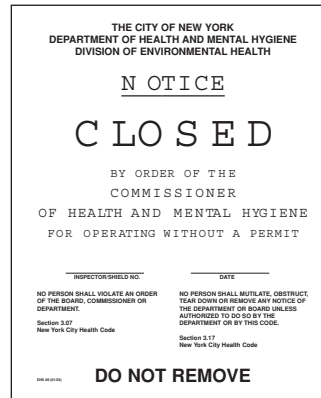
Reheating

Foods that have been properly cooled may be reserved after being reheated to 165°F. Reheating must be done rapidly; from refrigeration temperature to 165°F within two hours. Use a microwave, oven or stove for this operation. Never use a Hot Holding Unit for reheating; it will not supply enough heat to reheat food within two hours.

Cooked foods, which have been properly cooled down, as described above, may be served again only a single time. Any leftover must be discarded.



Use ice bath for cooling hot foods.



CAN THIS HAPPEN TO YOU?

the permit application process was not yet complete but operations began despite this. Others were establishments that for one reason or another did not renew their annual permit.

When the Department closes an establishment, substantial fines are levied. These fines, combined with the loss of business and customer confidence can be detrimental to your business. Please ensure that your permit application process is complete before you begin a new operation and that the permit is renewed annually thereafter.

During the year 2003, at least 60 food establishments operating without a permit or with an expired permit were closed by order of the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Some of these were new establishments for which

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which of the following is not considered a potentially hazardous food?

- a) Chicken breasts
- b) Oysters
- c) Dried peas
- d) Boiled noodles

2. Potentially Hazardous Foods provide conditions favorable for:

- a) Bacterial death
- b) Bacterial growth
- c) Bacterial stagnation

3. Bacteria grow best when food is stored within the temperature danger zone. This is:

- a) 45°F to 140°F
- b) 45°F to 145°F
- c) 41°F to 140°F
- d) 41°F to 145°F

4. Shell eggs must be refrigerated upon receipt in a food establishment. The maximum temperature required is:

- a) 38°F
- b) 41°F
- c) 45°F

5. The bacteria commonly found on the surface of raw chicken are:

- a) Salmonella
- b) Staphylococcus
- c) B. Cereus

Answers to How Much Do You Know:

1. C; 2. B; 3. C; 4. C; 5. A

ILL FOOD WORKERS

Public Health law prohibits anyone from working who has a boil, infected wound or diarrhea, or who is diagnosed with an infection or illness from an organism that can be transmitted through foods: such conditions include cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and diarrhea from *E. coli* (e.g. *E. coli* 0157:H7). Persons who are diagnosed with some illnesses that can be transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets or contact with respiratory secretions (e.g. tuberculosis and diphtheria) are also prohibited from working.

The recent outbreak of the illness, Hepatitis A, in Pennsylvania is suspected to have been caused by food-workers who were ill but continued to work. These individuals might not have realized that they were ill or that their illness could have been transmitted to others.

Hepatitis A is usually mild viral infection that is characterized by jaundice (yellow discoloration of the skin), fatigue, fever, nausea, abdominal pain

and loss of appetite. It can be severe, especially in people with liver disease. This virus can be spread in several ways. One is when foods that are usually eaten raw or lightly cooked are contaminated with sewage. Another is when ill food workers do not wash their hand thoroughly after using the restroom and then go on to work with ready-to-eat foods.

Food Service Supervisors have a critical role in the prevention of illness. While they are not expected to be doctors, they should be familiar enough with their staff to notice when someone is not their usual self and question such person as to their health. An ill worker must remain off the job until well again. Adequate hand washing facilities must be provided and staff trained in good hand washing practice. Food Service Supervisors must also ensure that vegetables that are typically eaten raw, lightly cooked or just added to other foods be washed thoroughly in potable, running water.



The NYC DOHMH is engaged in a new quality improvement initiative with a number of establishments. This initiative is designed to encourage food service establishment operators to monitor and maintain food safety standards on a daily basis.

Establishments that demonstrate the use of quality improve-

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COURSE

ment measures in place and have an excellent inspection history may be eligible to receive a Golden Apple award. This award will be valid for one year and, when prominently displayed, will indicate that the establishment is operating with the highest food safety standards.

We hope that if you have been invited to participate in this project, you will take the opportunity to promote your restaurant.

WANTED: FOR CONTAMINATING HUMAN FOOD . . .

Preferred Foods:

Cereal grains, seeds or sweet foods. Will eat almost anything.

Signs of Infestation:

Tracks, urine stains, droppings that are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long and greasy rub marks along favorite pathways. Gnaw damage on boxes and paper is common. Nests in walls, ceilings, under appliances or in upholstered fur-



niture; may be up to 30 feet from food sources.

To Prevent Harboring this Vermin:

- ◆ Keep your building free of piles of garbage, cardboard and other debris.
- ◆ Seal all openings 1/4 inch or larger.
- ◆ Fill holes with steel wool or wire mesh before caulking.

To Capture this Outlaw:

- ◆ Place traps along runways with the trigger at a right angle to the wall.
- ◆ If using poison, it must be in a tamper-proof bait station.
- ◆ Check traps and bait stations frequently.
- ◆ Do not touch dead mice with bare hands.

- ◆ Monitor traps and bait stations for at least a week after activity ceases.

Source: FOOD TALK Winter 2000

WHAT DO DATES ON A FOOD PRODUCT MEAN?

Except for infant formula and baby food, product dating is not required by Federal Regulations. Whenever a date is used, it is followed by a phrase which explains what that date represents. Common phrases used to explain dates include: "Sell by" "Use by", "Best if used by", "Use Before" and "Expiration".

◆ A "Sell By" date lets a storeowner know how long an item can be on display. As a

consumer, you should purchase this item before the "sell-by" date.

◆ A "Best If Used By" date or a "Use Before" date is a recommendation to the consumer that the best flavor or quality is guaranteed by that date.

◆ A "Use By" date is the last date recommended for use of a product while it is at its peak quality. This date is determined by the manufacturer.

◆ An "Expiration" date refers to the last date a product is

guaranteed by the manufacturer to be safe for consumption. This phrase (usually associated with drugs) when used on egg cartons, has a different meaning from when found on other foods and drugs. On egg cartons it signifies the last day the store may sell the eggs as fresh. These eggs are still edible but not fresh.

Paying special attention to dates help to ensure that we purchase products when they are at peak quality.

AVIAN (BIRD) FLU

Avian influenza or “bird” flu is a contagious viral infection that can affect all species of birds, however, domestic poultry stocks are especially vulnerable. The virus is found in the feces of infected birds and is spread rapidly to others when drinking water and cages become contaminated. Signs of this disease range from a mild infection with no symptoms to a severe epidemic that kills up to 100% of infected birds. The most effective way of dealing with an outbreak is to destroy all birds; both sick and healthy that have been exposed to the virus. Proper disposal of carcasses, quarantine and thorough disinfection of infected farms all are essential to control this illness.

The only known way for humans to catch the disease is through close contact with live, infected birds. Birds excrete the virus in their feces, which dry up and become aerosolized, and is then inhaled. Symptoms are similar to other types of flu—fever, malaise, sore throat and cough.

There have been no confirmed cases where avian flu

passed from person to person. However, the World Health Organization is examining the possibility that bird flu may have passed between humans in a case in Vietnam, where two sisters recently died after possibly contracting it from their brother. The illness can be treated with antiviral drugs. Researchers are currently working to develop a vaccine.

Avian flu seems to have a high fatality rate in humans. In an outbreak in 1997, six out of the 18 people who were infected died. In the recent outbreaks, there have been over 20 confirmed deaths from the virus. Health experts fear that the virus could exchange genes with a human flu virus if a person was simultaneously infected with both. The more this double infection happens, the higher the chance a new virus could be created and be passed from person to person.

Avian Flu is not a food-borne illness, thus there should be no fear of eating chicken or eggs. However, purchasing supplies from a reputable supplier and practicing good personal hygiene are prudent.



TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENT REMINDER

In a 1998 Health Code change, the temperature at which cold foods must be cooled, held, displayed and stored was reduced from 45°F to 41°F. The five-year grace period that was put in place to enable operators to upgrade their equipment to comply is over and the lower temperature is now a requirement. Please ensure that your refrigerators are working well enough to maintain cold foods at this temperature. Hold potentially hazardous foods at 41°F or below to maintain food safety.



If you have questions or comments regarding this newsletter, please call the Bureau of Inspections or the Health Academy. The telephone numbers are listed below.

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