

Food Safety Newsletter

Tomatoes as a PHF

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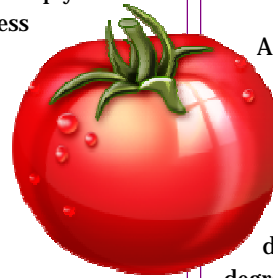
Extension 105

Jason Menchhofer, RS

Environmental Health Director

Extension 108

In the past many raw fruits and vegetables were considered non-potentially hazardous. When a food is considered to be non-potentially hazardous it is determined to have inherent qualities that control pathogen growth and/or toxin formation. In short, its not likely to allow bacteria and other microorganisms to multiply and cause a foodborne illness when consumed. When a food is considered to be potentially hazardous (PHF) then control measures are required to prevent the pathogen growth and toxin production.



Recent foodborne illness outbreaks linked to tomatoes have led to the examination of tomatoes as a possible potentially hazardous food (PHF). As a result of these examinations it was found that tomatoes do not always have the inherent qualities that prevent pathogenic growth or toxin production. In response to the studies and as a result of the recent foodborne outbreaks the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Agriculture released

Letter of Opinion 2008-01, entitled "Cut Tomatoes." A letter of opinion is released when there is an important change to the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code that warrants immediate action. The letter of opinion declares tomatoes to be a potentially hazardous food and adds them to the definition of a PHF.

Adding tomatoes to the list of potentially hazardous foods could change many practices for food service operations and retail food establishments. Once a tomato is cut it is required to be kept at or below 41 degrees Fahrenheit or at or above 135 degrees Fahrenheit. Tomatoes cut to be used on sandwiches must be kept on ice or in proper refrigeration. Once tomatoes are cut and added to another food, that food then becomes potentially hazardous. For example, salads and fresh salsa must be kept at the proper cold holding temperature of 41 degrees F or below. Beginning immediately, the mishandling of tomatoes will be noted during an inspection as a critical violation.

Potentially hazardous	Non-potentially hazardous
Cooked green beans	Raw green beans
Cut melon	Whole melon
Raw seed sprouts	Bread
Cut tomatoes	Whole tomatoes
Cooked pasta	Dry pasta

Handwashing Prevents Illness!

Handwashing is one of the easiest ways to prevent foodborne illness. The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code requires food employees to clean their hands and exposed portions of their arms for at least twenty seconds. Some instances when handwashing is overlooked is between han-

dling dirty and clean dishes, after smoking, eating, or drinking, and after handling trash or brooms and mops. The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code also requires a separate dedicated sink for handwashing. Some older facilities may not have a handwashing sink. If this is the case at your facility, just ensure

that handwashing occurs in manner to prevent the contamination of equipment, utensils, and food as well as the hands. Soap and paper towels are required to be available as well as a handwashing sign. The Van Wert County Health Department has signs available for posting.

Thermometers and Test Strips

Two items that seem to walk away in a food service operation or retail food establishment include a thermometer and sanitizer test strips. The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code Chapter 3717-1-04.2 (G) requires that food temperature measuring devices shall be provided and readily accessible for use. Section (I) requires that a test kit or other device that accurately measures the concentration of the sanitizing solution be provided. Accessibility of these items seems to be a problem. Buried in a drawer or looking for the item for five minutes definitely doesn't fit the definition of being accessible. For the thermometer the answer seems simple. The cook should be using the thermometer to check temperatures, so keep it in their area. Sanitizer test strips are usually kept far from the sink to avoid getting wet. But then, how often are they used? Try using Velcro® to stick them to the wall or on a shelf near the sink.

Common suppliers of thermometers and test strips include the following:

Bailey's Test Strips and Thermometers (888) 685 TEST or baileystst.com
(Carries the thin tip thermometer shown below)

Thermoworks (800) 393-6434 or www.thermoworks.com



Delphos Restaurant Equipment
(800) 526-0517

Hubert (800) 543 - 7374
www.hubert.com

Daydots (800)321-3687
www.daydots.com

The Van Wert County Health Department does not endorse any of the above companies or specific products.

First Aid for Choking posters are required by the Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3701-21-22. It states that the director of health shall provide standards for first aid for a choking



victim. Each food service operation must ensure that the standards are accessible to the public and the employees of the facility. If you are in need of a choking poster, please notify Britt Menchhofer, RS. The Van Wert County Health Department has posters available for distribution.

Ingredient Labels

The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code states that foods packaged in a food service operation or retail food establishment shall be labeled as specified in 21 C.F.R. 101 Food Labeling and 9 C.F.R. 317 Labeling, Marking Devices, and Containers. This states that when a food is packaged for consumers' self service then it must be labeled. Sandwiches made and placed out for customers to pick up without ordering and candy or other items repackaged from bulk and placed out for consumers must be labeled with certain information. When a customer places an order for the food then it is not required to be labeled or if a customer has to ask for the food then it is not required to be labeled. Label information shall include:



- 1) The common name of the food;
- 2) If made from two or more ingredients, a list of ingredients in descending order of predominance by weight;
- 3) A declaration of the quantity of the contents (weight);
- 4) The name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor (can omit street number if listed in the telephone directory);

- 5) Nutrition labeling if claims are made regarding nutrition content.

Bulk foods available for consumer self-service must have either the manufacturer's or processor's label or a card or sign that provides the information required for labeling food. This information must be in plain view for the consumer. For bulk foods packaged, inquire with the manufacturer if labels are available.

Correct for Chocolate Chip Cookies

Enriched flour (Bleached what flour, malted barley flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), brown sugar, semi-sweet chocolate chips (semi-sweet chocolate [sugar, chocolate liquor, cocoa butter], soya lecithin, pure vanilla), vegetable shortening (partially hydrogenated soybean and cottonseed oil, mono- and diglycerides, artificial butter flavor, beta carotene [pro-vitamin A-added for color]), milk, eggs, baking powder, vanilla extract, salt and baking soda

Incorrect for Chocolate Chip Cookies

Flour, Sugar, Shortening, Milk, Eggs, Baking Powder, Vanilla, Salt, Chocolate Chips, Baking Soda