food MATTERS

NYC Health

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This issue of Food Matters addresses:

- The Trans fat rules
- Handwashing vs. Sanitizers
- Get Rid of Rodents
- Safely Handling Fruits & Vegetables
- New wallet-sized Food Protection Certificate

TRANSFORMING NEW YORK
NEW TRANS FAT RULES TAKE EFFECT

The Health Code Amendment 81.08 mandates phasing out artificial trans fat in restaurant food. This transition is happening in two stages. In the first stage, food service establishments had until July 1, 2007, to make sure that all partially hydrogenated oils, shortening and margarine used for frying or for spreads have less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. (Oils and shortening used to deep fry yeast dough and cake batter are not included in this first deadline.) *To avoid an 81.08 violation, make sure that you are in compliance by checking labels today.*

The Trans Fat Help Center is here to help answer your questions—call **311** and ask for the Center, email **transfatinfo@citytech.cuny.edu**, or visit the web site at **www.notransfatnyc.org** for more information.

For the second stage, by July 1, 2008, all foods that contain trans fat must have *fewer than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving.* Packaged foods served in the manufacturer's original packaging are exempt.

Worried about making the cut? Check your spreads.

The most common reason that restaurants are not compliant with the trans fat regulation is that they use margarines and butter-like spreads that have too much trans fat.

Check the Nutrition Facts panel on all margarine and butter-like spreads used in your establishment. If there is no Nutrition Facts panel and partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is listed as an ingredient, you must document that the spread is less than 0.5g per serving. Remember to ask your supplier for products with 0 grams of trans fat!

MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG, MAYOR / THOMAS R. FRIEDEN, MD, MPH, HEALTH COMMISSIONER

HANDLING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: MAKE IT SAFE!

The number of food-borne illnesses from the consumption of fresh produce is on the rise. Fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet; however, harmful germs found in soil, water, and animal feces can easily contaminate fruits and vegetables. It is important to follow these safe handling tips. Be sure all produce is:

- Purchased from reliable and trustworthy sources
- Discarded if bruised or damaged
- Stored properly to avoid cross-contamination
- Is used under the First In, First Out (FIFO)principle
- Maintained at 41°F or below when needed (such as strawberries, lettuce, herbs, mushrooms, sprouts etc.)
- Is washed with plenty of cold running water just before using
- Scrubbed with a brush if it has a firm rind (e.g., cantaloupes, watermelons, oranges)
- Dried with disposable paper towels.
- Cut on separate cutting boards than those used for raw meats. Be sure to clean and sanitize cutting boards and utensils in between uses.

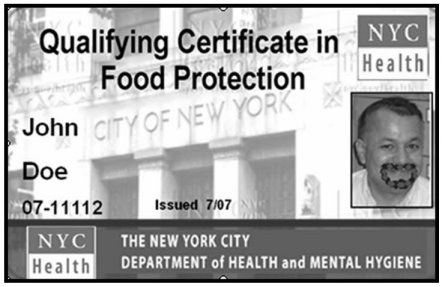
Raw Sprouts – A Risky Proposition?

Raw seed sprouts are typically used on salads, wraps, and sandwiches, etc., and can be highly contaminated. Rinsing with water may not be enough to reduce pathogenic germs. The FDA does not recommend the use of raw sprouts and advises that these are cooked prior to consumption. This advice is especially important for people with compromised immune systems, pregnant women, children and the elderly.

UPDATES FOR FOOD PROTECTION

New wallet-sized Food Protection Certificates

Beginning April of 2007, the New York City Health Academy started issuing the Food Protection Certificates in the form of a wallet-sized card to everyone who successfully completed the course. This new certificate has more security features to prevent fraudulent duplication. Certificates issued prior to April 2007 are still valid. Currently, replacement certificates issued prior to April 2007 will be in the old format. In early 2008, we will be ready to replace the old certificate in the new format to those who prefer the new cards, even though there is no need to do so.



Free Classes: You Can Take the NYC Food Protection Course Online

Did you know that the NYC Food protection course is available online? This course is being offered free until December 31, 2007. After December 31, 2007, the cost will be $107.50. To connect to the Online Food Protection Course, please visit: www.nyc.gov/foodprotectioncourse.

At this time, the course is offered only in English and is free of charge. Once students register for the course, they can complete it online and pick a time and date to take the final exam, which is administered at the Health Academy.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which of the following is true about trans fat in foods?
   - ☐ A It raises HDL (the good cholesterol)
   - ☐ B It lowers LDL (the bad cholesterol)
   - ☐ C It raises LDL (the bad cholesterol)
   - ☐ D All of the above

2. Which of the following foods can be handled with bare hands?
   - ☐ A Green salad
   - ☐ B Tuna sandwich
   - ☐ C Pizza dough
   - ☐ D Sushi

3. Food workers should wash their hands:
   - ☐ A Every 20 to 30 minutes
   - ☐ B Every time their hands become contaminated
   - ☐ C When the Health Inspector is around
   - ☐ D When handling ready-to-eat foods

4. The three key strategies of integrated pest management are to starve them, build them out, and destroy them
   - ☐ True ☐ False

Answers to How Much Do You Know: 1. C; 2. C; 3. B; 4. True

RODENTS ARE COSTLY AND CONTAMINATING: KEEP 'EM AT BAY!

Both rats and mice, whether dead or alive, can spread disease. Their presence in a food establishment is indicative of poor sanitary conditions including inadequate garbage disposal.

Does Your Establishment Have a Rodent Problem?

Rodents are nocturnal, meaning they are most active at night, but they usually leave signs of their presence, including:

- Rub and gnaw marks
- Burrows and grease tracks
- Droppings.

How to Say, "Good Riddance to Rodents!"

Rodents need a place to live and food to eat. You can eliminate them by removing their shelter and food supply. *Integrated Pest Management* is a system that combines preventive and control measures to eliminate rodent infestations. This system involves the following simple steps:

Starve Them!

- Keep all foods in vermin-proof containers; preferably made of metal, glass or hard, food-grade plastic.
- Clean as you go! Do not allow food debris build up—remember, that a rat only needs an ounce of food and an ounce of water a day to survive.
- Sweep up spilled food immediately and continuously clean residue on equipment and surfaces
- Garbage is food for rats—take care of trash. properly by using metal garbage cans or approved plastic containers with tight-fitting lids and keeping garbage cans covered.

Build Them Out

- Remove all clutter from basements to eliminate hiding and nesting areas.
- Seal any openings to the facility holes that are larger than 1/2 inch. This includes space under doors, unprotected or broken gutters, and basement floor drains.
- Utility lines coming into the facility must be fitted with metal plates to cover openings.
- Keep doors and windows screened with 1/2-inch mesh hardware cloth.
- Repair any breaks in the sewer line which connects your restaurant with the main sewer system.

Destroy Them

- Hire a licensed pest control service to destroy rodents with appropriate rodenticides. *(Only a licensed exterminator is allowed to use pesticides.)*
- Use spring-loaded traps for temporary control. Glue boards are seldom effective for adult rats but may capture their pups and mice.
- Traps may be baited with ground meat or peanut butter as rats seldom get access to protein.

Remember: Cleaning and sanitizing is the most effective form of pest control

HAND WASHING VS. HAND SANITIZERS: WHAT'S BEST?

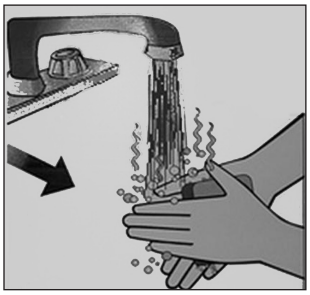
Improper, inadequate hand washing is considered the leading cause of food-borne illnesses. Some food service establishments, taking a cue from health care facilities, have advocated the use of gel hand sanitizers to replace proper hand washing. The New York City Health Code permits the use of hand sanitizers in a food service establishment only after washing hands properly. The use of hand sanitizers is considered an acceptable alternative to washing hands for personnel in healthcare facilities only.

Current research does not show that alcohol-based hand sanitizers effectively eliminate or reduce infectious food-borne pathogens; therefore, washing hands with soap and water is the best method to remove contamination.

(*Source:* www.cfsan.fda.gov/~comm/handhyg.html)

Reasons for Hand Washing vs. Only Sanitizer

- Pathogens (disease-causing germs) found in food service establishment are quite different than those found in health care facilities. Food service facilities are mainly concerned with fecal pathogens, which are often transmitted by contaminated hands handling food products. Examples of such pathogens include Shigella spp., Hepatitis A virus and Norwalk-like virus.



- Dirt and oils on the hands of health care workers are very different from food service workers. Food service workers work with fatty and protein-rich foods that may or may not be visible. Proteins and fat can also reduce or neutralize the effectiveness of alcohol. The best method to remove fat and protein is with soap, friction and running water.

UNTIL NEXT TIME

We hope you have found this edition of Food Matters! helpful and informative. The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene seeks to keep all New Yorkers healthy and all food establishments informed of the latest food facility guidelines.

We'll be in touch soon. In the meantime, visit the NYC DOHMH's Health Academy at: http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hany/hany.shtml

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

General Information ☎ 311

ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL
66 John Street, 11th floor,
NY, NY 10038
☎ (212) 361-1000

BUREAU OF FOOD SAFETY & COMMUNITY SANITATION
253 Broadway, 12th floor,
Box CN59A, NY, NY 10007
☎ (212) 676-1600

CITYWIDE LICENSING CENTER
42 Broadway, 5th floor,
NY, NY 10004
☎ (212) 487-4436

HEALTH ACADEMY
160 West 100th Street,
NY, NY 10025
☎ (212) 280-9211

INSPECTOR GENERAL
80 Maiden Lane,
NY, NY 10005
☎ (212) 825-2141

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