



EXCHANGE STAFF VETERINARIAN

Veterinary, Preventive Medicine and Public Health Newsletter

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Flu Season Is Approaching:

The advent of the flu season is rapidly approaching. Unpredictable as to when it will strike, the season usually starts around October and may run as late May with the peak usually occurring in January or February.



The flu is spread mainly by droplets disseminated by coughing, sneezing and even talking. The droplets land in the mouths or noses of those nearby. Picking up the virus from touching contaminated surfaces and objects occurs less frequently. Most adults are capable of transmitting the flu virus a day before symptoms even appear and up to 5-7 days after becoming ill. In other words, you may be contagious before you even know you're sick. Even worse, you may be infected and yet show no symptoms at all.

The single most preventive measure you can take to avoid contracting the flu is make sure you get your annual flu shot. Knowing the proper way to cough or sneeze will also help cut down on the transmission. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and if you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. Properly dispose of your used tissue and wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

Digital Food Thermometers: Tired of waiting for your baby dial thermometer to reach the temperature of the product you're measuring? If so, you might want to consider switching to an approved food digital thermometer. Read out time is only a fraction of the time and the sensor is usually 1/4" from the end compared to 1.5"



with baby dials making it easier when measuring thin items. Regardless of the thermometer sensor depth, it is still important to measure the temperature at the thickest part of the item you are testing. The average cost of a digital is around \$10-\$20.

How to Sanitize a Thermometer Quick and Easy:



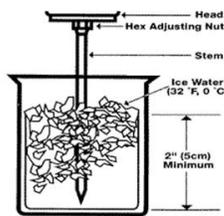
Most food service personnel sanitize their thermometers using a sanitizing cloth that has been dipped in a bucket of sanitizing solution. This method requires the user to measure the strength of the sanitizer with a test strip at the time of mixing and

throughout the day to verify that the strength is correct. In addition, the sanitizer bucket often takes

up valuable counter space, must be properly labeled and cannot be used to clean/wipe down countertops. Another much simpler method is to sanitize the probe with a single-use alcohol swab. Whichever method you use, make sure you allow the thermometer to air dry before inserting the probe into any food items.

Proper Storage of In-Use Utensils: Confused on how to properly store your in-use utensils? Unless you're storing ice cream, rice or mash potatoes scoops in a container of running water at a temperature of 135°F or higher, storing in-use utensils in water, in an ice/water mix or in a container of sanitizer is generally not an acceptable storage method. Ice scoops may be stored in ice bins/trays as long as their handles are up and not touching the ice, however, ice scoops are not allowed to be stored inside ice machines. Storing utensils in a container with a sanitizer **is not acceptable** unless you allow the utensils to air dry before using. Using utensils which are still wet can result in contamination of the food product with the sanitizer.

Calibrating Thermometers:



The importance of maintaining potentially hazardous foods in the safe temperature zone cannot be stressed enough unless time is used rather than temperature as a control point. While the Food Code is not specific on the required calibration frequency, it does state that thermometers

should be calibrated as often as necessary to ensure accuracy and in accordance with the manufacturer's specification. Our recommendation is to calibrate weekly, when using for the first time, or after being dropped. To calibrate, fill a large cup with finely crushed ice. Add water to the cup and stir well. Immerse the thermometer stem a minimum of 2 inches into the ice/water mixture without touching the sides or bottom of the cup. Wait at least 30 seconds before adjusting. Without removing the stem from the ice, adjust the nut under the head of the thermometer until the pointer reads 32°F. Document the date and whether or not any adjustments were made.



Don't Wash that Chicken!

Based on a tradition many of us learned from our grandmothers, some cooks are under the impression that

washing poultry products prior to cooking will help reduce the bacteria load and therefore yield a safer product. Truth be known, most of the bacteria is not removed by washing and what does get washed off

ends up contaminating the surrounding area including our clothing and sinks. According to one study, washing resulted in bacteria being splashed as far as three feet away. So don't wash that chicken but do wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after handling any raw meat product and cook your bird to an internal temperature of 165°F or higher.

Plagued by Fruit Flies? Ever had to deal with fruit flies? Those pesky flies that seem to multiply before your eyes? Fruit flies live off moist, fermenting (ripening) foods.



The entire life cycle from egg to adult is only 8-10 days and during this time, a female may lay up to 500 eggs! Found frequently around decaying produce, they can also be found in soda dispensing trays, drains and drain lines, garbage disposals and cans, and even damp mops and sponges. The best course of action in preventing a fruit fly infestation is to eliminate sources of attraction and breeding. If space is available, store ripened fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator to prevent them from gaining access. Pay particular close attention to keeping garbage cans clean since a small amount of food goes a long way for a tiny fruit fly. Even when best practices are followed, they can be difficult to control since they tend to lay their eggs in hard-to-reach locations. While pyrethrum-based aerosol insecticides are effective adulticides, they won't take care of the eggs or immature flies. In most cases, facility workers aren't allowed to use insecticidal sprays within the facility. Fortunately there are commercial traps available that eliminate new adults as they emerge. Traps, which generally last about a month, can often be obtained from your installation pest management personnel or can be purchased for a very reasonable cost. The internet is also replete with different methods of making your own homemade traps using common household products. If you decide to go with the homemade route, check with your health inspector as well as the brand concept manager first for approval.

Boil Water Advisory – Don't Forget About the Filter:

After a boil water advisory, flushing out all water



lines including drink dispensers, equipment containing water reservoirs, tea and coffee machines, is intuitive for most of us working in the food service business but have you ever thought about the water filtration system? While most water filters are designed to filter out Cryptosporidium, a microscopic parasite that is resistant to chlorine-based disinfectants, filtering will not eliminate other potential disease-causing microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses. Contact your installation civil engineering/public works department for specifics in the event of an advisory.

Soda Fountain Dispensing: Unclean soda dispensers effects both safety and quality. To keep product at its best, clean dispensers at the following frequencies:

Daily: After washing your hands with soap and water, remove all nozzles and diffusers from the dispensing valve and clean them with a sanitizer solution and a nozzle brush. Leave them in the sanitizer for at least 3 minutes. Remove and air dry. Insert the brush using a sanitizer solution into the lower valve body to clean. Reinstall nozzles and diffusers.

To clean the drip pan, pour ½ gallon of chlorine-based sanitizer down the drain. Remove the rack and wash and sanitize. Wipe down the inside/outside of the drip pan with sanitizer. Clean all exterior surfaces of the dispenser including levers with a clean cloth towel and chlorine-based sanitizer solution. Clean the exterior and interior of the ice chute with a nylon brush and sanitizer.

Weekly: Clean the BIB syrup connectors. Disconnect the syrup lines from the Bag-in-Boxes. Soak the connectors in a dedicated bucket of sanitizer solution for one minute. If you're soaking more than one connector at a time, be sure to label each one with a flavor label. Allow to air dry before reconnecting the syrup lines to the correct BIB.

Monthly: Clean the inside of ice bins. Unplug the dispenser and empty all of the ice then rinse the bin with warm water. Using a soft, nylon brush and sanitizer, scrub the inside of the bin and chute.

Check your manufacturer's manual for addition maintenance requirements.

Clarification to Last Month's Piece on Keeping Foods Safe in the Summer: In the last newsletter, the safety of commercially processed mayonnaise was discussed. While the acidity of commercially prepared mayonnaise does not promote the growth of harmful bacteria, it is still imperative to refrigerate all mayonnaise-based salads except for those recipes using a HACCP process with laboratory confirmation demonstrating inhibition of pathogen growth at room temperature (e.g. Burger King® mayonnaise).

Contact Us –

Food-Drug.Safety@aafes.com FAX: 214-465-2488

COL Vasut: 214-312-3604 or Vasutd@aafes.com

MAJ Agresta: 9-011-49-6134-715-475 or

Agrestake@aafes.com

SMSGt Piotrowski: 214-312-3736 or

PiotrowskiB@aafes.com

Mr. Walker: 214-312-3420 or Walkerd@aafes.com

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