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No Reservations

No Reservations **is a monthly newsletter published by RQA Inc. for the restaurant industry.**

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Providing Safe Water

As you know, the water in your restaurant is used for drinking, cooking, cleaning, and personal hygiene. Yet, protecting patrons and employees from waterborne pathogens is typically not a concern until there is a problem with the water supply or plumbing system. Thus, while blatant water-related problems may capture your attention, subtle threats to the water supply may go unnoticed. Hence, in the interest of public health and customer satisfaction, consider reviewing the following information.

To begin, water that is safe to drink is called potable water. The primary sources of potable water include approved public water systems (municipal) and non-public (community) water systems. Approved water transport vehicles may also provide potable water but the majority of foodservice establishments typically obtain water only from municipal or community sources. Under usual circumstances, municipal water is safe so further testing for contamination is not required. In contrast, water from non-public systems must be tested for contamination at least annually and as mandated by state regulations. For more information about local water sources, refer to the annual water quality report from your local water supplier.

Fortunately, (except during natural disasters or other water-related emergencies) situations that threaten the main water supply are relatively rare. However, if your establishment experiences a water outage, contact your local health department immediately to determine if restaurant closure is required. When water is restored, flush the pipes, icemakers, and water lines to remove any contaminants that could have been introduced into the water system (run water for ≥ 1 minute and make three batches of ice and discard). If the water outage was caused by a water main break, power plant failure or natural disaster, do not resume normal operations until you find out if there is a boil-water advisory in your area.

In addition to external issues that could threaten your water source, there are internal factors to take into account. For example, cross-connections from improperly installed or poorly maintained plumbing could allow mixing of potable and nonpotable water. To prevent such problems, your establishment should be equipped with backflow and backsiphonage devices to keep unwanted, reverse flow wastewater from entering your clean water supply. Of course, always comply with local plumbing codes and allow only licensed plumbers to install or repair any aspect of the plumbing system.

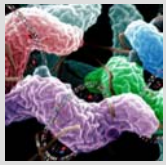
Water plays a vital role in the safety and quality of the food and beverages you serve; however, this resource is often taken for granted. Therefore, conduct routine inspections to ensure the water utilized in your restaurant continually meets safety standards. Protect the health of your customers and employees by knowing how to recognize potential problems and be proactive if you suspect the safety of your water is compromised.

Pathogen Spotlight: Campylobacter

This article is the first in a series of future articles that will address individual pathogens that are of particular concern in the foodservice industry. *Campylobacter* was chosen to kick off the series because, even though it is predominately a foodborne pathogen, it can also be found in contaminated water.

While some foodservice workers may not be familiar with *Campylobacter*, it is actually the second most frequently reported cause of foodborne illness in the U.S. (1). The primary food sources linked to *Campylobacter* infections include improperly handled or undercooked poultry products, unpasteurized ("raw") milk and cheeses made from unpasteurized milk, and contaminated water (2). Of particular concern is the fact that it takes a very small number of *Campylobacter* organisms to make someone sick - even one drop of juice from raw chicken meat can cause an illness (1).

Because many chicken flocks are infected with *Campylobacter,* outbreaks of campylobacteriosis are associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry meat or food contaminated with juices from raw poultry (1). Thus, proper hand hygiene and preventing cross-contamination (from unwashed cutting boards or utensils) is crucial for protecting your customers from this pathogen. In addition, because *Campylobacter* outbreaks have been associated with contaminated water from private wells, obtaining water from properly maintained approved sources is critical.



http://www.causus.be/bestanden/2009/Image/campylobacter_jejuni.jpg

References:

1. United States Department of Agriculture. Food Safety and Inspection Service. Fact Sheets. Foodborne Illness and Disease. Campylobacter Questions and Answers. Internet: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/FACTSheets/Campylobacter_Questions_and_Answers/index.asp.

2. Food and Drug Administration. Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Bad Bug Book - Foodborne Pathogenic Microorganisms and Natural Toxins – 2nd edition. Internet: http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodSafety/FoodborneIllness/FoodborneIllnessFoodbornePathogensNaturalToxins/BadBugBook/UCM297627.pdf.

Vietnamese Restaurant, Orlando, FL. — December 2012

A popular Vietnamese restaurant in Orlando was temporarily closed Tuesday afternoon because an inspector found numerous health violations, according to the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. The inspector, responding to a complaint, found "critical" violations at the restaurant, including a failure to warn customers about the danger of raw beef in soup, a failure to refrigerate poultry and noodles adequately, greasy and/or dirty food-contact surfaces, dead roaches in a wine cabinet at the front counter and numerous new and old rodent droppings. "This establishment is closed to protect public health and safety," a yellow sign on the door reads. The restaurant was also closed temporarily on March 20 and March 21 during routine-but-unannounced food inspections, according to the department's website. It passed inspection on Sept. 24, although violations cited included cold food being held at too high a temperature, food being thawed at room temperature and unwashed fruits and vegetables, raw shrimp and wrapped pork being stored with other food.

http://articles.orlandosentinel.com

Chinese Restaurant, Kansas City, MO. — December 2012

The department said the restaurant was closed after a routine inspection due to “the history and number of repeat violations.” The restaurant had 15 critical violations, including employee washing hands without soap and then drying hands on dirty apron, and fried chicken and rice held at improper temperatures. No food preparation, service or sales may take place until the restaurant has corrected the violations. The restaurant must then be re-inspected.

http://www.kansascity.com

Vietnamese Restaurant, Kansas City, MO. — December 2012

The Vietnamese restaurant was closed late Friday afternoon due to “excessive” roaches. The restaurant was cited for 10 critical violations, including live roaches in food bags underneath the prep table, on the wall behind the water heater in the kitchen, and inside egg roll packages in the kitchen. In this case, it was the presence of live roaches that resulted in the closure, as that indicated that the pest control methods were not working, a health department spokesman said. Restaurant officials could not be reached for comment. However, the restaurant was re-inspected, had just one critical violation and was allowed to reopen Tuesday evening.

http://www.kansascity.com

Mexican Restaurant, Pacoima, CA. — January 2013

This restaurant was closed January 24, 2013 for food not being pure or free of contamination. Also, the utensils in the facility were observed with gross contamination from debris. The restaurant was allowed to reopen on January 25, 2013

http://publichealth.lacounty.gov

Popular Hamburger Restaurant, Van Nuys, CA. — December 2012

The restaurant was closed on December 26, 2012. The restaurant was found to have food that was not pure or free of contamination. The restaurant was also cited to an imminent health hazard to public health or safety. The restaurant was re-inspected on December 28, 2012 and was allowed to re-open.

http://publichealth.lacounty.gov

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