

Volume R0312, Issue 1

March 2012

No Reservations

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

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Food Deliveries: When in Doubt, Send It Back!

Restaurant patrons want food that looks appealing, tastes fresh, and is safe to eat. However, the quality of the food you serve is only as good as the quality of the ingredients you receive. Accepting food deliveries is the first opportunity for you to safeguard your investment and protect the health of your consumers.

Food quality begins before it even enters your facility. It is important to only do business with approved food suppliers who are in compliance with local, state, and federal laws. Beyond a supplier audit, you can check a supplier's food safety practices by reviewing the latest inspection report and checking the condition and cleanliness of the delivery trucks to make sure food products are transported in a manner that protects the integrity of the food. For cold and frozen food delivery trucks, check the temperature inside the cargo space and review the temperature logs.

Only trained employees should be authorized to accept shipments. These employees should be capable of inspecting deliveries to determine if products meet the safety and quality standards of your establishment. As a part of this inspection, employees should know when and how to check temperatures of perishable foods, and they should be equipped with the appropriate type of food thermometer.

Dry, non-perishable products should be checked for signs of damage that could compromise the quality or safety of the product. Packages should be free of holes, tears, dampness or water stains and cans should not be dented or swollen. Any product that appears to have been exposed to pests- such as insect eggs or rodent droppings-should be rejected. Fruits and vegetables should be checked for signs of mold and damage. Whole, unprocessed produce typically does not require temperature control for safety but if the produce has been processed in any way (cut melons, leafy greens) it must be received at a temperature of 41°F (5°C) or lower.

Temperature control during transportation and delivery of meat, poultry, and seafood are of particular concern because animal products are especially sensitive to time-temperature abuse and must be received at temperatures at or below 41°F (5°C). The only two exceptions are live shellfish, which must be received on ice or at an air temperature of 45°F (7°C), and shell eggs, which can be received at an air temperature 45°F (7°C) or lower. Keep in mind, these foods must be stored immediately upon arrival because toxins that are introduced as a result of time-temperature abuse cannot be destroyed by freezing or cooking.

If the safety or quality of a food delivery is questionable, reject it before the delivery person even leaves the loading dock. This will protect the integrity of your inventory even before it enters the kitchen.

Storing Food: Protecting Your Investment

Poor food storage practices can lead to serious financial and public health consequences for your establishment. Proper food storage is good for business and can be achieved even when space is limited. At a minimum, consider adopting the following recommendations.

First in, First out (FIFO): Before food is even stored, use-by or expiration dates need to be checked to ensure that out-of-date products do not make their way into production. Remind employees to store the oldest foods in front of those with later dates. Once stored, the products in front are used first.

Dry Storage: Because moisture and heat can compromise the quality and safety of dry and canned food, a storeroom should be well ventilated and the ambient temperature should be maintained between 50°F and 70°F (10°C and 21°C). Dry goods should be stored out of direct sunlight, away from walls, and at least 6 inches (15 centimeters) off of the floor.

Refrigerated Storage: The temperature setting of walk-in coolers and reach-in refrigerators must be capable of maintaining the internal temperature of food at 41°F (5°C) or lower. The temperature of the unit and the internal temperature of randomly selected food should be checked at least once per shift. To optimize air flow, use open shelving, keep doors closed, and do not overload the unit. To prevent cross-contamination always store raw meat, poultry, and seafood away from ready-to-eat food.

Frozen Storage: While storage temperatures vary, frozen foods should be stored below 0°F (-18°C). Defrost units regularly and check temperatures often.

Unlike many unforeseeable obstacles in the foodservice industry, food storage practices are relatively easy to monitor and control. It is worth your time and effort to develop and enforce food storage policies that can maximize your profits and protect the health of your customers.

Source: National Restaurant Association.(2008). Servsafe Essentials 5th edition. Chicago, Il

Foodborne Illness at Chicago Area Restaurant

January 2012

A Cook County Health Department spokeswoman says test results have confirmed that the number of people who contracted Norovirus food poisoning connected to a restaurant in Wheeling has now risen to 146. Case investigations are ongoing, but at it's unclear at this point whether the eatery is the source of illness in all of those cases because gastrointestinal illness is common this time of year. The restaurant closed voluntarily Tuesday morning after receiving complaints from some customers who said they'd become sick after eating at the restaurant. Public Health investigators spent all day at the eatery Tuesday, but the agency isn't yet certain of the specific source of the sickness. This restaurant, which bills itself as the nation's fourth busiest restaurant, reopened Wednesday afternoon, one day after it voluntarily closed its doors.

"We worked with the [Cook County Department of] Public Health to clean and sanitize the restaurant," said a restaurant spokesman. "We've satisfied all of the requirements, and they've allowed us to reopen."

The Health Department said there is now no risk to the public.

BY: Cook County Public Health Department

Public Health Department Confirms Salmonella

February 2012

Four cases of salmonella have been confirmed and another 36 are being investigated by Hamilton's public health department.

Public health says it believes the cases are connected to a pita restaurant. An associate medical officer of health says the restaurant has been temporarily shut down, and may remain closed for days.

During a scheduled health inspection of the restaurant on Feb. 1, inspectors found that cooked chicken wasn't being kept at a high enough temperature. Similar problems were discovered during a follow-up inspection on Thursday. One case of salmonella and one case of gastrointestinal illness came to public health's attention last Friday. Lab results confirmed the two cases were connected to the same facility as two others, leading health officials to declare a salmonella outbreak late Wednesday. The decision was made to reach out publicly to those who might be affected by the outbreak.

A woman who answered the phone at the restaurant on Thursday said, "I don't believe this is in my food." She also said she would like documentation of the cases from public health, and declined to comment further.

Submitted by Wanton Writer on Fri, 01/13/2012 .

Restaurant Closed for Violations

January 2012

A restaurant in Dorchester, MA closed this week for the following violations:

1. Inspector entered restaurant as door was opened for customers – found food left out in kitchen out of temp-found approximately 50 pounds of cooked-brown rice at 76.4 F approximately 30 pounds of white rice at 74.3 –approximately 30 pounds of beef bone with meat on bone at 71.3 F.
2. At inspection, found only one 2 door display cooler operating refrigerator–not enough cooler space for storage.
3. At time of inspection, the staff could not locate the proper " pocket" thermometer for testing foods for proper temps.
4. At inspection, found case of peanuts & lettuce stored on the kitchen floor.
5. At time of inspection, the inspector observed the staff only rinse pans & return to use.
6. At inspection, found hand sink not accessible for use since it was blocked with an overflowing trash container.
7. At inspection found small flies through-out basement.
8. The floor through-out the kitchen has a very heavy build-up of soil and grime,-including under & around all equipment. The basement floor has heavy soil & food spills besides broken or missing floor tiles.
9. There was no proof that at least one full-time staff has completed the SERVE / SAFE certification course OR has signed up for a course.

By: *foodsafeguru*

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