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No Reservations

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

Inside this issue:

Main Course— The FDA Food Code: A Little History 1

On the Side— *Pathogen Spotlight: Norovirus* 1

Daily Special—*Le plat du jour* 2



The FDA Food Code: A Little History

As you are aware, the U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code is the foundation from which state, local, and tribal regulators develop their own food safety rules and regulations. However, beyond this basic association, many people know relatively little about the history or scope of this comprehensive food regulatory document.

At the turn of the 20th century, studies on the role of milk in the spread of disease led the Public Health Service (PHS) into the area of food protection. Based on the conclusion that effective disease prevention needed to incorporate across-the-board food sanitation measures, model food codes were developed. Initially published in 1924, the now titled *Grade A Pasteurized Milk Ordinance – Recommendations of the PHS/FDA* was written to help state and local governments initiate and maintain programs for prevention of foodborne illness. Since that time, the PHS has published numerous editions of model food codes and, between 1993 and 2000, the *Food Code* was issued in its current format, every two years. Today, the FDA updates and releases new editions of the Food Code every four years (with interim supplements) and, according to the Association of Food and Drug Officials, 49 of the 50 States have adopted codes patterned after different versions of the Food Code.

The Food Code reflects years of experience and scientific inquiry from contributing agencies, regulators, organizations, and individuals. As summarized by the FDA, "the provisions of the Food Code provide a system of prevention and overlapping safeguards designed to minimize foodborne illness; ensure employee health, industry manager knowledge, safe food, nontoxic and cleanable equipment, and acceptable levels of sanitation on food establishment premises; and promote fair dealings with the consumer." While the Code is neither federal law nor federal regulation, it is designed to be consistent with federal food laws and regulations to facilitate easy adoption at all levels of government. As such, the model Food Code is used by food regulatory jurisdictions at all levels of government and can serve as a state level statute/regulation or a local level ordinance.

In conclusion, retail foodservice establishments share the responsibility with federal and state regulators to protect the health of consumers by following the best practice recommendations set forth in the FDA Food Code. From a good business standpoint, it is worth the time and effort to familiarize yourself with the version of the Food Code adopted and enforced in your State. From a public health standpoint, practicing FDA recommendations to protect your customers from a foodborne illness is simply the right thing to do.

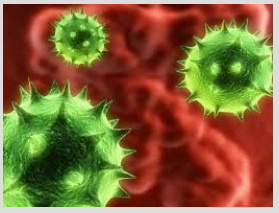
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Pathogen Spotlight: Norovirus

Many people may not realize that norovirus is the leading cause of illness from contaminated foods in the United States. In 2012, a new strain of norovirus, named GII.4 Sydney, was detected in Australia. While all strains of norovirus are highly contagious, GII.4 Sydney appears to be particularly easy to spread. It is not yet known whether the new strain will cause more norovirus illness than in other years. However, it is an opportune time to remind foodservice workers about the importance of proper hand hygiene and not working while experiencing vomiting or diarrhea.

Food handlers who are sick with norovirus can easily spread the illness person to person or by contaminating food and drink they touch. In fact, people with norovirus are not only contagious while they are experiencing symptoms but also during the first 3 days after recovery. Therefore, to protect spreading this illness, it is critical that foodservice workers follow the exclude/restrict health policies of their establishment while they are experiencing symptoms and for 3 days thereafter. Of course, appropriate hand hygiene is critical for prevention of norovirus infection and for controlling transmission. Yet, be advised that the efficacy of alcohol-based and other hand sanitizers against norovirus remains controversial; hence, anyone handling food should always wash their hands with warm, running water and soap.

Anyone who works in the foodservice industry needs to know about norovirus. For the sake of public health, foodservice workers must understand and appreciate the importance of not handling food while sick and always practicing scrupulous hand hygiene.



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Steakhouse, Vancouver, WA. — February 2013

Health officials have closed a Vancouver, Wash., restaurant for at least two days after nearly two dozen people reporting becoming ill after eating there. Clark County public health officials say viral gastroenteritis is suspected in the symptoms reported by 22 people who ate last weekend at the steakhouse. Symptoms included nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Acting Health Officer Dr. Diana Yu closed the restaurant Friday for at least 48 hours so all surfaces and equipment could be sanitized and potentially contaminated food discarded. Yu says restaurant management and staff are following health department recommendations. County health department records show the restaurant received a perfect score on its most recent health inspection in November. The restaurant was allowed to reopen three days later.

http://www.thenewstribune.com

Asian Restaurant, Muncie, IN. — January 2013

The restaurant was forced to close on Friday after a Delaware County Health Department inspection found 17 critical violations. Josh Williams, administrator of the health department, said the establishment voluntarily closed to focus on correcting the violations. "We recommended they close and that's the route they chose," Williams said. An employee at the restaurant told The Star Press re-opening is anticipated as early as this afternoon. The establishment will be allowed to re-open after a follow-up inspection shows that the violations have been corrected.

http://www.thestarpress.com

Chinese Restaurant, College Station, TX. — October 2012

A College Station Chinese restaurant did not get a good fortune after inspectors with the Brazos County health department shut the eatery down last week. The restaurant was shut down after inspectors found roaches in the restaurant. The critters were found crawling around the dinning room, kitchen, and storage area. Even dead and dying roaches were spotted. According to the Brazos County Health Department, the facility tried to treat the problem with an unknown pesticide, most likely a roach bomb. Residue from that pesticide was found on kitchen equipment and had to be removed. Restaurants are required to use a licensed pest control company to treat insect problem. Since this was the restaurant's second suspended permit of the year, the restaurant was forced to remain closed for 72 hours.

http://www.kbtx.com/home/headlines

Thai Restaurant, St. Pete Beach, FL. — January 2013

This facility is a popular Thai restaurant with tourists on St. Pete Beach. But what visitors might not know is that the restaurant was temporarily closed down by the state after an inspector found 15 critical violations on the restaurant's December 3rd inspection. The problems included temperature violations on the chicken, pork, shrimp and beef, squid sitting out thawing improperly, food stored on the floor, a dirty microwave, slime in the ice machine and an employee not washing their hands after taking out the trash. The inspector also documented rodent droppings behind equipment on the cook's line. The state found 13 rodent droppings on their December inspection and additional droppings on previous inspections in January and July. Along with all those droppings, the state inspector actually found a rodent running around by the walk in cooler.

http://www.wtsp.com

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