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No Reservations

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

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The HACCP Approach

While many people associate Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) with the food manufacturing industry, this proactive approach to food safety is also used in restaurants, schools, hotels, and even supermarkets. As defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), HACCP is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product (1).

Developed in the 1950's, HACCP was used in the 1960's by the Pillsbury Company and NASA to ensure the safety of food transported into space and protect astronauts from foodborne illness. Today, HACCP principles have evolved into an effective food safety system that enables food handlers to identify potential food safety hazards and take corrective actions before problems occur. As such, this systematic approach guides the food handler to incorporate quality and safety into the product during preparation as opposed to simply inspecting the product after it has been prepared. Hence, each HACCP plan is unique because it must accommodate the food handling processes necessary to prepare the menu items offered by the establishment.

If you do not have a HACCP program already in place, contact your local health department and they will tell you whether a plan is required for your restaurant. In addition, health officials will work with you and provide assistance when developing your plan. Keep in mind, HACCP is not a stand-alone program; rather, it is built upon and incorporates your facility's Standard Operating Procedures. In order to design and implement a HACCP program, management must be properly trained and possess the qualifications necessary to educate and train the staff. However, even the best HACCP program will be unsuccessful if managers and employees are not committed and motivated to prepare the safest food possible.

In addition to protecting your customers from a foodborne illness, a successful HACCP program may provide the following benefits: consistency in product preparation; optimal product quality; better control of product inventory; increased profit; and, enhanced employee awareness and participation in food safety practices (1). Thus, even if a HACCP plan is not required for your establishment, consider the competitive edge it can provide.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Managing Food Safety: A Manual for the Voluntary Use of HACCP Principles for Operators of Food Service and Retail Establishments. Internet: http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/HACCP/UCM077957.pdf (accessed June 26, 2013)

Pathogen Spotlight: Vibrio vulnificus

Although *Vibrio vulnificus* causes less than 100 cases per year (1), it is still a pathogen worthy of discussion, especially if your establishment has fresh seafood on the menu. *V. vulnificus* is a bacterium often associated with shellfish, crustaceans, and finfish found throughout coastal waters of the continental United States. While more than 90% of *V. vulnificus* illnesses in the U.S. are associated with consumption of raw Gulf Coast oysters, ingestion of clams and shrimp also has been associated with disease (1). Also, cases of *V. vulnificus* tend to be more prevalent during the warmer months, when water temperatures are higher than 20°C (68°F).

To protect your patrons from this pathogen, it is important to purchase seafood only from approved, reputable suppliers. Because thorough cooking or freezing kills the organism, illnesses usually occur from consumption of raw seafood. Hence, always display prominent warnings about the dangers of consuming raw or undercooked fish and seafood. When cooking seafood, cook until the inside reaches a temperature of 145°F (for at least 15 seconds). However, fishcakes should be cooked to 155°F and stuffed fish to 165° F. Remind food handlers to wash hands, equipment, and surfaces when handling raw seafood and keep the product refrigerated at 40°F or lower until ready to cook.

Luckily, in the United States, only sporadic illnesses from *V. vulnificus* have occurred and no foodborne outbreaks have been reported (1). Nevertheless, you do not want your restaurant to be the cause of even a single case. Therefore, awareness, responsible purchasing, and careful handling of fresh seafood are essential for protecting your patrons from this pathogen.



1. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Bad Bug Book. Foodborne Pathogenic Microorganisms and Natural Toxins Handbook. Retrievedfromhttp://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/UCM297627.pdf Accessed June 28, 2013.

Mexican Restaurant, Lombard, IL. — June 2013

The number of E. coli cases tied to an outbreak at a Mexican restaurant in Lombard, Ill., has risen to 9 confirmed and another 8 probable, according to the DuPage County Health Department. As Food Safety News reported, the restaurant was closed on Friday for an E. coli investigation. The restaurant remained closed through Tuesday. Out of the 9 confirmed illnesses, 6 people were hospitalized, though all have since been discharged. Health officials are investigating the possible cause of the outbreak. The restaurant managers said no employees have been sick and there have been no problems reported at the restaurant chain's other two locations in Villa Park and St. Charles, which use the same food distributors.

www.foodsafetynews.com

Indian Restaurant, Oakland, PA. — June 2013

An Oakland restaurant recently cited for numerous violations has been ordered by the Allegheny County Health Department to close. A sign on the door of the Indian restaurant tells customers it's closed due to maintenance, but the Health Department first issued a consumer alert for critical violations less than two weeks ago. The restaurant's owner told Channel 11 upon issuance of the consumer alert that he expected the issues to be resolved within a couple days. According to the Health Department, the violations included cockroaches throughout the restaurant, including on the buffet and in the kitchen, mop water being dumped into a sink also used to rinse dishes, a plumbing backflow, no certified food handler onsite and food being kept at unsafe temperatures. "I kind of wish I never ate here," said one customer. Despite the owner's claims that they would pass re-inspection, the Health Department said violations continued, prompting them to shut down the business. Another customer said, "I think it's terrible that, first of all, that would even happen to a restaurant with the conditions and things that they found, and for them to have a second chance to be re-inspected and they couldn't even pass that and are ordered to shut down is a poor … it's terrible for that restaurant." The Health Department said it usually only has to close around six restaurants each year. This restaurant is the fourth this year to be shut down. The other three reopened after making necessary changes.

http://www.wpxi.com

All Restaurants, Broken Arrow, OK. — June 2013

The Tulsa City-County Health Department announced Wednesday all restaurants using the City of Broken Arrow water supply must close immediately due to a precautionary boil order. A major water main break Monday night forced the boil order for all residents and businesses. By Wednesday morning, restaurants were ordered closed. "Due to the volume of water needed to safely operate a restaurant, all food establishments that serve open food must cease operations immediately until such time that the boil order has been lifted," a news release said. "Open food" is defined as food that is not prepackaged and is prepared on site. A lot of people went out for lunch, but were turned away. "We looked at the door and it said the health department closed it, because the water was off," one resident said. The restaurants were closed by the health department because of the boil order. "I didn't even think about that," another resident said. "You can't boil, you wouldn't want to eat rice cooked in water not fit to drink." Closing for a day or two is a huge hit, even for a small restaurant. "Well, today should be $2,000," one restaurant owner said. For the largest restaurants, the losses are larger. One large restaurant threw out $1,400 worth of food being prepped for lunch. "We've got a large job to do," the owner said. "We've got to completely clean and drain the water from the ice machines, Pepsi is coming and they'll clear out all the water from their machines, and then we run our faucets for about 30 to 45 minutes, and then we'll get the all clear from there." A PSO transformer that powers Broken Arrow's water treatment facility went out Monday night, forcing the city to shut off its main water valve to Pryor. It burst when they reopened it Tuesday. When the tanks ran low, the pressure dropped, and that could have pulled contamination in through gaps in the pipe. Before reopening once the boil order is lifted, food establishments must flush their water system, discard previous ice supplies, and wash-rinse-sanitize all food contact equipment, according to health department.

http://www.news9.com

For more information about these topics and others, please contact:

Dan Cahill
RQA, Inc.
Phone: 602-331-9151
Email: d.cahill@rqa-inc.com

Please visit: www.rqa-inc.com

RQA® Providing Solutions from Concept to Consumption

Insurance Contact:

Ian Hughes

Phone: 914-242-7812

Email: crisismanagement@catlin.com