Have a Food-Safe Summer

Microorganisms need just two factors to thrive and flourish: warm temperatures and moisture. That is why the risk of foodborne illness increases drastically with summer temperatures and humidity. Cut down on the risk of food-borne illness and protect your customers by following 3 simple steps:

1) **Keep coolers in check.** Make sure your refrigeration and freezer units are keeping up with the change in temperature. This is something that should be done regularly all year around but is even more critical in the hot summer months.

2) **Utilize one of the many approved cooling methods.** It is not wise or acceptable to marinate or cool foods by letting them sit at room temperature. Cooling foods can be done using an approved cooling method including: an ice bath, ice paddles, putting in shallow heat transferrable pans, or other means of rapid cooling.

3) **Take temperatures.** Keep ambient air thermometers and probe thermometers handy make sure potentially hazardous food is spending as little time as possible in the “danger zone” for bacteria growth between 41°F-135°F.

Following these essential steps will help reduce the likelihood of foodborne illness in your establishment. Having a safe and sanitary restaurant is good for the community and good for your business!

Norovirus: What You Need to Know

Norovirus is very common and highly contagious illness that can be spread easily from person to person through contact with ready-to-eat foods (like salads, sandwiches, bread, etc.) or through contaminated surfaces. The virus can take 12-96 hours to begin presenting itself. During that time, the carrier can be contagious before even knowing they are infected.

Norovirus is generally characterized by a sudden onset of nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, low-grade fever, headache, body aches, and fatigue. Symptoms usually last 1-2 days but the virus may be contagious for as long as 3 days after symptoms subside. Within a food establishment, norovirus can be difficult to wipe out because it can withstand extremely hot or cold temperatures and many types of disinfectants.

To prevent the spread of Norovirus or inadvertently causing a foodborne illness outbreak, it is imperative to have an employee illness policy, not to allow any employee to work when sick, wash hands thoroughly, and generally practice safe food handling; especially when preparing ready-to-eat foods.

“Having a safe sanitary restaurant is good for the community and good for your business!”

Norovirus symptoms often start suddenly and are highly contagious.
Spotlight: Inspector Emily Shoemaker

What is your background? I graduated from Indiana University Kokomo with a degree in Health Sciences in 2014.

How long have you been a health inspector? Since October 2014.

What was most surprising to you about this job? I was surprised how many establishments are permitted in Tippecanoe County. Over 740 permits were issued last year!

What is the hardest part of your job? It’s tough when I can tell that a manager/worker is uncomfortable or stressed over my visit. I am there to provide a service to the public but also to be helpful and give guidance to the restaurant!

What is the best part of your job? I love being able to teach and explain the reasoning behind the food code and hopefully provide and understanding of the rules we enforce and why they are so important.

Why do you come to work everyday and do what you do? Why is it important to you? It is important that there are checks and balances. As an inspector, I am part of a team that helps ensure that each food establishment in our county is run as safely as possible. Sometimes an outsider is able to come in to an establishment and see an issue that has gone unnoticed and offer a solution that may have otherwise been overlooked. Having a fresh set of eyes to take a look at things is beneficial in any type of work setting.

Sick Policy

Every food establishment is required to have an employee health policy for their establishment. The purpose is to ensure that all food employees notify the person-in-charge (PIC) when they experience any of a set of six specific symptoms OR are diagnosed with a highly contagious disease.

It is required by law for any persons in food service to report when they are experiencing:

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Jaundice (yellow of skin or eyes)
- Sore throat with fever
- Lesions (such as boils or infected wounds) on any exposed part of the body

In addition to these physical conditions, it must be reported to the PIC whenever diagnosed by a healthcare professional as being ill with any of the following diseases that can be transmitted through food or person-to-person by casual contact:

- Hepatitis A
- E-coli
- Norovirus
- Salmonella
- Shigellosis

This protocol helps ensure appropriate steps are taken to preclude transmission and/or an outbreak of foodborne illness or communicable disease in our community. Once reported, it is the charge of the PIC to exclude, restrict and/or monitor food employees who have reported any of the aforementioned conditions.

Quiz

1. True or False? It is okay not to wash your hands before preparing food as long as you wear single-use food preparation gloves.

2. True or False? It is permissible to use a sponge to clean food-contact surfaces as long as you dip it in sanitizer water first.

3. Not properly washing hands is responsible for what percentage of all foodborne illness cases:
   a. 100%
   b. 0%
   c. 25%
   d. 40%

(*See answers in “Scraps & Crumbs)
**Scrap and Crumbs**

**Quiz Answers**

1. FALSE: Hands should ALWAYS be washed before applying single-use gloves.

2. FALSE: Sponges may NOT be used in contact with food-contact surfaces or cleaned food equipment.

3. D. Not properly washing hands accounts for over **40%** of foodborne illness cases.
Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code