CITY OF GRAND
PRAIRIE
ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Food for Thought

Environmental Quality Division

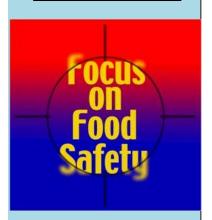
Summer 2013

Issue 7

GRand Prairke

We Are Online!!
Www.GPTX.ORG

Inside this issue:		
Rapid Reheating	2	
Proper Thawing Methods	2	
Chill: Refrigerate Promptly	2	
Food Handler Cards	3	
Handwashing	3	
Botulism	3	
West Nile Virus	4	
Date Marking of Prepared Foods	4	



Plastic or Wood?

Cutting boards are made of different materials. The most popular cutting boards available in the market are made of plastic and wood. However, when it comes to food safety, nonporous surfaces such as plastic and tempered glass are preferred because they are easier to clean and sanitize than wood.

Whether you use plastic or wood, the most important safety measure is to clean and disinfect all surfaces thoroughly. Always wash cutting boards in hot, soapy water or place them in the dishwasher and sanitize them with an approved sanitizing solution and let them air dry. Solid hardwood cutting boards are safe to run in the dishwasher, but wood laminates must be washed by hand.

A good sanitizing solution can be easily made by adding one tablespoon of liquid chlorine bleach to a gallon of tap water. Always use testing strips to measure the concentration of chlorine. Low concentrations will not sanitize properly and higher concentrations tend to be corrosive.

The Partnership for Food Safety Education recommends consumers to use two different cutting boards when preparing food items, one for all the fresh produce and ready-to-

eat foods and a different cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. This practice will eliminate the probability of crosscontamination. In addition, the best way to reduce the risk of foodborne illness are to clean, separate, cook, and chill.



Regardless of which type of cutting board you use, it is always important to remember that proper handwashing and good cleaning habits are just as important in the prevention of food borne illnesses.

Food Handlers and Proper Hygiene

The Texas Food Establishment Rules contain requirements that apply only to food handlers. These requirements relate to health and hygiene and have been included to ensure that food handlers take steps to avoid contaminating food. A food handler is anyone who handles food or items that may come into contact with food, such as eating and drinking utensils.

Each food handler must take all precautions to ensure that food or surfaces that come in contact with food are not contaminated by his or her body or anything he or she is wearing.

You are required to:

- •Wear gloves while handling ready to eat food (RTE);
- •Wear clean outer clothing;
- •Make sure bandages and

dressings on exposed parts of your body are properly covered;

- •Not eat over uncovered food or equipment and utensils;
- Not sneeze, blow your nose, or cough over uncovered food or over food preparation areas;
- •Not spit, smoke, or chew tobacco where food is handled.

Page 2 Food for Thought

Rapid Reheating

Reheating food items is a critical control point at which reaching proper internal temperatures can help ensure that the food is safe to eat. Employees must know the proper internal temperature for reheating food, monitor the reheating process, and record temperatures of reheated foods. The Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER) require that all leftover foods or foods that have a pre-cooked or leftover food as an ingredient be reheated to 165 °F for at least 15 seconds within a 2 hour period.

Reheat foods using proper procedures.

-Reheat the following foods to 165 °F for 15 seconds:

- Any food that has been cooked and cooled, and will be reheated and then placed on hot holding.
- Leftovers that need to be reheated for hot holding.
- Products made from leftovers, such as soup or casseroles.

Precooked processed foods that have been previously cooled.

-Reheat foods rapidly. The total time a food item must remain between 41°F and 165°F cannot exceed 2 hours

-Serve reheated food immediately after reaching the proper internal temperature or place in appropriate hot holding unit until ready to serve.



Proper Thawing Methods



You forgot to thaw something for tomorrow. So you grab a package of meat or chicken and use hot water to thaw it fast. But is it safe? What if you remembered to take food out of the freezer, but forgot and left the package on the counter all day? Neither of these situations is considered safe and these methods of thawing may lead to foodborne illness. Raw or

cooked meat, poultry or egg products, as any perishable food must be kept at a safe temperature. However, as soon as they begin to thaw and become warmer than 40 °F, bacteria that may have been present before freezing can begin to multiply.

When thawing frozen food, it's best to thaw in the refrigerator where it will remain at

a safe, constant temperature
— at 40 °F or below.

There are three <u>safe</u> ways to thaw food:

- 1. In the refrigerator
- 2. Under cold running water
- 3. Cooking without thawing

Chill: Refrigerate Promptly!

Refrigerate foods quickly. Cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria. Do not over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to help keep food safe. Keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of $40^{\circ}F$ or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Use an appliance thermometer to be sure the temperature is consistently $40^{\circ}F$ or below.

Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer.

Never defrost food at room temperature. Food must be kept at a safe temperature during thawing. Cold temperatures only slow down bacterial growth, but do not kill them even at below zero temperatures. Ready to eat foods and left overs must be placed in a cooling unit before they enter into the danger zone.



Summer 2013, Issue 7 Page 3

2012-2013

FOOD HANDLER CLASS

SCHEDULE

SCHEDOLE			
June 6	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
June 20	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM	
July 18	9:00 AM	3:30 PM*	
August 1	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
August 15	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM	
September 5	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
September 19	9:00 AM	3:30 PM*	
October3	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
October 17	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM	
November 7	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
November 21	9:00 AM	3:30 PM*	
December 5	9:00 AM	3:30 PM	
December 19	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM	
*Spanish only.			

Pre-Registration is required.

Call 972-237-8055



Food Handler Cards

Employees who handle food or utensils must obtain a food handler card. The cards must be obtained within 45 days of the person's hire date.

The City offers food handler classes. However, certificates from other cities and state approved courses are accepted. Certificates obtained through approved providers must be replaced with a Grand Prairie certificate. The cost to obtain a Grand Prairie food handler card is \$15.00 and proper documentation such as driver's license, birth certificate, Texas ID, or consular identification must be provided. There is a \$5.00 fee for duplicate copies. Only the original copy of a food handler certificate is accepted.

Pre-registration is required. In order to attend a Food Handler Class you must pre-register. Attendees with no pre-registration will not be allowed to attend. To pre-register please call the Environmental Quality Division at 972-237-8055.

Classes are offered the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the Environmental Quality Division offices, 206 W. Church Street, 2nd Floor. One class on the 3rd Thursday will be offered in Spanish. Please arrive at least 15 minutes early. The classes begin promptly. Persons without the fee, identification, or late arrival will not be admitted. The city accepts cash, checks, and credit cards with proper identification.

For more information call at 972-237-8055.

Handwashing

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them. If soap and water are not available, use an alcoholbased hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers

do **not** eliminate all types of germs.

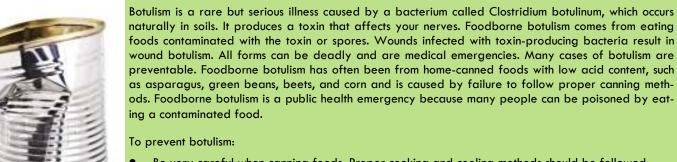
How do you use hand sanitizers?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are

dry.

Alcohol-based hand rubs significantly reduce the number of germs on the skin and are fast-acting, but do not substitute for handwashing. For more information visit: www.cdc.gov/features/handwashing/

Botulism



- Be very careful when canning foods. Proper cooking and cooling methods should be followed
- Discard cans with dents on seams or rims
- Do not let children younger than 2 years of age eat honey. Honey can have bacterial spores that can cause botulism
- Get prompt medical care for infected wounds



Environmental Quality Division 206 W. Church St. 2nd Floor Grand Prairie, TX 75050



This newsletter is a publication of: Environmental Services Department Environmental Quality Division Submit Your Comments to: Editor: Werner Rodriguez

Phone: 972-237-8056 Fax: 972-237-8228

Email: wrodriguez@gptx.org

West Nile Virus

The West Nile Virus (WNV) is a disease transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. In Texas there are about 86 different species of mosquitoes, but very few are a health concern. Culex quinquefasciatus, the southern house mosquito, is the main vector for the West Nile Virus in Texas. Mosquito season, in general, runs from May to October of every year. Peak times for WNV infection in humans are usually seen during the month of August. The 2012 mosquito season set record numbers for West Nile Virus transmission from mosquitoes to humans in the entire North Texas area, including the City of Grand Prairie. To prevent WNV infection you most protect yourself, employees, and your family.

Here are a few tips for protection from mosquito bites in your business and at home:

- •Use insect repellents containing DEET or any other ingredient approved by the EPA.
- •Wear long-sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors. Spray your clothes with insect repellent for added protection.
- •Avoid the outdoors at dawn and at dusk. These are peak mosquito hours.
- •Drain any standing water on the yard. Mosquitoes breed in stagnant waters.
- •Remove any water holding container from your facility or turn them upside down.
- •At home, keep pools clean and chlorinated.
- •Dispose of any tires. Tires can hold water and breed mosquitoes.
- •Clean pet water dishes regularly.
- •Change the water in bird baths and plant pots at least once a week.

For more information visit us at: Www.gptx.org/FightTheBite





Date Marking of Prepared Foods

The growth of pathogenic bacteria to dangerous levels takes place when potentially hazardous food items are held in the danger zone (above $41^{\circ}F$ and below $135^{\circ}F$) and/or at refrigerated temperatures for extended periods of time.

Refrigeration only slows down the growth of microorganisms, but does not kill them. Monitoring and limiting holding times on ready to eat (RTE) food items, potentially hazardous food products, refrigerated items, etc., is an important task that all employees must perform daily. All food items should be date marked to assure that the food is either consumed or discarded within seven days of preparation even when stored in the refrigerator.

Date marking must be done when the food items are:

- Potentially hazardous
- Ready to eat
- Refrigerated
- •Held more than 24 hours

Date marking is also required for ready to eat potentially hazardous food that is prepared and held refrigerated for more than 24 hours; and

RTE potentially hazardous foods must be marked with the date of preparation, and must be consumed or discarded within seven days, including the day of preparation;

RTE potentially hazardous foods must be maintained at 41°F (5° C) or less for the duration of the seven days.