

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Winter 2020
Issue 19

Produce Safety

Vegetables and fruits must be handled safely to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Bacteria in soil or water can come in contact with fruits and vegetables, contaminating them. While in storage, make sure these items are stored in a way that will prevent cross contamination from other food items especially raw meats.



When purchasing, make sure the items are not bruised or cut and mold free.



To prolong shelf life, fruits and vegetables should be stored at a temperature of 40°F or below. All produce that is purchased precut should be stored in the refrigerator for best quality and safety.



All produce should be washed under cool water before eating. Scrub firm produce with a produce brush.



Wash fruits before you peel and eat them. Refrigerate fresh produce within 2 hours of peeling or cutting.

For more information visit: <http://food.unl.edu/safety/forgotten-fridge#handling>.

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Prairie
TEXAS
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QUALITY

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Ozone

The DFW area is classified as moderate nonattainment for 8-hour ozone by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). When emissions of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides interact in the presence of sunlight, ground level ozone is formed.

At high concentrations, ozone can cause damage to human health and vegetation. Approximately half of the ozone pollution in the region results from gasoline evaporation and combustion of motor vehicle engines.

To help reduce ground ozone levels, avoid filling up your gas tank during the hottest part of the day, keep your tires inflated at the proper pressure to reduce gas consumption, and maintain your vehicle per manufacturer's instructions.

For additional information on ozone visit:

<http://airnorthtexas.org>



Bare Hands Contact

Did you know that except when washing fruits and vegetables, food employees may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as a deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment. Most foodborne outbreaks involve the fecal-oral route. The biggest contributor to spreading these agents is through bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food products. Due to poor or nonexistent handwashing policies, employees of food service establishments put the public at risk. In addition, infected cuts, burns, or boils on hands can also result in contamination of foods ready to eat.

The Health Department requires two methods of preventing the spread of foodborne disease by this mode of transfer:

- Prohibiting food workers from preparing food when they are sick with infectious diseases;
- Requires thorough and frequent handwashing.

Most people do not wash their hands frequently enough. And not all employees are honest with the condition of their health. As a final barrier, bare hand contact with exposed ready-to-eat food is prohibited.

For additional information visit: www.fda.gov/food.

Grease Trap Maintenance

All food service establishments in the City of Grand Prairie must pump their grease trap according to their established frequency. The pumping frequency of the grease trap is shown on the health permit issued to each facility. When contracting services, ensure that the liquid waste hauler is permitted by the city and after the grease trap is pumped a copy of the trip ticket should be obtained by the owner/manager of the facility. All establishments must keep a copy of each pumping event for at least 2 years and must be available for inspection at all times.

For more information please call 972-237-8055.

2020 Food Handler Schedule

February 6	9:00 AM	3:30PM
February 20	9:00 AM*	3:30PM
March 5	9:00 AM	3:30PM
March 19	9:00AM	3:30PM*
April 2	9:00 AM	3:30PM
April 16	9:00 AM*	3:30PM
May 7	9:00 AM	3:30PM
May 21	9:00 AM	3:30PM*
June 4	9:00 AM	3:30PM
June 18	9:00 AM*	NoClass
July 2	9:00 AM	3:30PM
July 16	9:00 AM	3:30PM*

*Spanish only.

Pre-registration is required.
Register by calling 972-237-8055.

Food Handler Class

A food handler card or certificate issued by accredited providers is required to work in the food industry in Texas and the City of Grand Prairie. Employers must ensure that all their employees have a food handler card or certificate within 60 days of hiring. The cards or certificates must be available for inspection at all times. Allowing employees to work without a food handler card or certificate is a violation of state laws and the City Code of Ordinances.

Food handler cards or certificates obtained through accredited providers are not required to be transferred to a city of Grand Prairie food handler card.

The Environmental Quality Division offers food handler classes the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month for employees who work in the food industry. One class, the 3rd Thursday is offered in Spanish. To attend a class you must bring an identification and pay a fee of \$15.00. Call 972-237-8055 to register or obtain additional information.

For more information visit: www.gptx.org/environmentalservices.

Take the Get Fit GP pledge for a healthy lifestyle and sign up for a chance to win prizes, www.gptx.org/getfitgp.



Excluding Employees from the Workplace

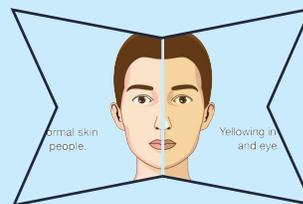
It is important to ensure that your employees are healthy enough to safely prepare and serve food. Occasionally, there will be times when an employee must be excluded from working with or preparing food. In the State of Texas, it is the responsibility of the person in charge to require reporting by his or her employees of any diseases that are transmissible through food. Foodborne illnesses that fall under this category include Norovirus, hepatitis A virus, Salmonella typhi, Shigella, or shiga toxin-producing E. coli. Additionally, if an employee experiences any of the below symptoms, that employee should not be permitted to work until cleared by a licensed physician.



Vomiting



Diarrhea



Jaundice



Sore throat with fever

Employees with open sores or wounds should not work with food unless the lesion is covered by a dry, durable, tight-fitting bandage.



To keep our water clean, make sure only rain goes down the storm drain.

PICK UP:

- TRASH
- LEAVES
- PET WASTE



The Clean Prairie program recognizes companies that care about their city, the environment, and the community. To be designated as a Clean Prairie member, a business must participate in Level 1. There are other levels to choose from to be designated as a Clean Prairie company. Learn more at www.gptx.org/cleanprairie.

Mosquito Season is Coming Prepare Your Facility

It is mosquito season and time to start taking precautions to avoid breeding mosquitoes.



- Keep rain gutters free of debris and leaves
- Repair leaky pipes, outdoor faucets, and ensure proper operation of sprinklers
- Cover or turn upside down any container that may collect water
- Fill in or drain any low places (puddles, ruts) around your property
- Cover trash containers to keep out rain water
- Fill in any tree rot holes and hollow stumps that hold water with sand or concrete
- Keep grass cut short and shrubbery well-trimmed around your property, so adult mosquitoes don't have a place to hide

For additional information visit us on-line at www.gptx.org/fightthebite

This Newsletter is a publication of:
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Environmental Quality Division

Submit your comments and suggestions to:

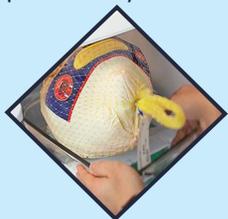
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Thawing Frozen Foods

Freezing is a great way to preserve food and keep it safe for an extended period of time. However, it is important to properly thaw frozen foods in order to protect it and prevent contamination. According to the Texas Food Establishment Rules, potentially hazardous food must be thawed in one of several ways:



Under refrigeration that maintains the food temperature at 41°F or less



Under cold running water



Heating the food to an adequate internal temperature or thawing in a microwave and then immediately transferring it to a conventional cooking oven.

It is important to note that if you choose to thaw frozen potentially hazardous food under running water, the water must be at a temperature of 70°F or below. The water must also be running hard enough to remove loose particles in an overflow. Additionally, potentially hazardous foods may not be at a temperature above 41°F for more than 4 hours. This time includes thawing under refrigeration and time exposed to running water. By properly thawing potentially hazardous foods, you can protect your employees and your customers. For additional information visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/keep-food-safe.html>