

FOOD SAFETY TRAINING: HOW TO GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT

As a food manager, one of your responsibilities is to train and supervise workers. Teaching and training others looks easy – all you have to do is tell them what to do and they'll do it – right? If only it was that easy...

How can you more effectively help your employees update their knowledge, learn new information, or better yet, change their food safety practices? An impor-

tant start is to learn as much as you can about your food workers – the learners. What do they know about food safety? How does each worker translate food safety information into their food handling practices?

To answer these questions, observe and talk with your workers during each step in the flow of food in your operation – from receiving to serving. Ask questions



Continued page 2

CHILLING FACTS ABOUT LISTERIOSIS

What is listeriosis?

Listeriosis is a food-borne illness caused by eating food contaminated with the harmful bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*. Listeria is different from most other food-borne bacteria, because it can grow at refrigerator temperatures.

In the United States, listeriosis accounts for an estimated 2,500

foodborne illnesses and 500 deaths each year. In pregnant women, listeriosis can be a serious illness that can lead to miscarriage or stillbirth, premature delivery, serious illness or death of a newborn baby. The illness also affects older adults and adults with weakened immune systems. The flu-like symptoms may include fever, muscle aches, and some-

times gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea or diarrhea. Other symptoms such as headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance, or convulsions may also occur.

How does food become contaminated?

Since *Listeria monocytogenes* is found in soil and water, raw and

Continued page 3

FOOD SAFETY FROM THE CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

An observant customer is a savvy consumer when purchasing ready-to-eat food. How food is handled, stored, prepared, and served will be noticed. These observations will determine whether the customer will bring return business or never eat at

your restaurant again.

As a food manager, you can anticipate what a consumer sees from the other side of the counter. Imagine that you are a customer. What do you see when you step up to the counter to

place a lunch order? You'll look at the menu, make your selection, and then, glance at the counter. Does it look clean? Do a quick scan of the employee that is about to take your order. What's your first impression about the

Continued page 4



FOOD SAFETY TRAINING: HOW TO GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT *Continued from page 1*

to find out what workers know. Here are some suggestions:

- Can you tell me about how you ____ (for example, receive the frozen chicken, thaw the fish, store the eggs)?
- To keep food safe, what would you do in this situation; ____.

These types of open-ended questions will help you listen and understand what workers know about food safety and how that knowledge is used and put into practice.

As adults, food workers come to your operation with considerable knowledge and experience. Careful questioning and listening signals workers that you are genuinely interested in them and ensuring the quality and safety of the food served. Further, the more you know about your workers' food safety knowledge and practices, the easier it will be to link new information to what the worker already knows.



To base your training and supervision on the needs of the learner, consider these five key educational practices.

1. Share decision making with your staff about what is to be learned and how learning takes place.
 - Ask learners to decide what they would like to know and the best method(s) for learning. Weave in your education needs as well but be sure the content and method is based on what they want.
2. Base the content of your training on what they know about food safety.
 - Ask your experienced staff to describe and demonstrate key food safety practices to younger workers(provided the experienced staff knows and follows them).
 - Most workers know what they "should" do to keep food safe, but may take short-cuts when distracted or out of time. Instead of repeating what they know, ask what gets in their way of doing what they "should." Let workers give ideas for how to deal with these barriers.
3. Instead of "telling 'um what to do," view your educational role as a facilitator, guide, or coach.
 - Whenever possible, model recommended food safety practices. For example, when orienting a new cook,

demonstrate how to take end-point cooking temperatures as a part of the recipe. Always use a hair restraint and wash your hands when entering the kitchen.

- Encourage critical thinking about issues and problems by asking workers how they would solve the problem. Then, the next time the problem does occur workers will be better equipped for solving it on their own.
4. Ultimately, the food worker is responsible for his/her own learning. However, there is much you can do as a trainer/supervisor to encourage and support learning and practice changes. For example:
 - "Catch" food workers when they follow recommended practices. "Great job, John, when you washed your hands after cracking the eggs for breakfast." "Mary, I like how you planned ahead and thawed the steaks in the refrigerator for today's entree."
 - Initiate a recognition and incentive program for learning, re-learning, and practice changes. This is especially important for your younger workers. From small prizes such as water bottles and movie passes to paid time off, be sure every employee is rewarded.

CHILLING FACTS ABOUT LISTERIOSIS *Continued from page 1*

processed foods can become contaminated. Vegetables can become contaminated from the soil or from manure used as fertilizer. Many wild and domestic animals carry Listeria and can contaminate foods of animal origin such as meats and dairy products. Certain processed foods, such as soft cheeses, hot dogs and deli meats, can become contaminated after processing.

How can you reduce your risk for listeriosis?

If you are pregnant or have a weakened immune system, you should avoid eating certain high-risk foods.

Avoid these foods:

- Hot dogs, luncheon meats, bologna, or other deli meats unless they are reheated until steaming hot. Listeria is killed by cooking. Wash your hands after handling hot dogs, luncheon meats or deli meats.
- Refrigerated pâté, meat spreads from a meat counter. Canned meat spreads and pâtés are safe to eat.
- Smoked salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna or mackerel found in the refrigerated section of the store unless it is cooked in a recipe, such as a casserole. Canned or shelf stable smoked seafood is safe to eat, but should be refrigerated after opening.
- Unpasteurized or raw milk and foods made from unpasteurized milk. Pasteurization kills Listeria.

- Salads made in the store such as ham salad, chicken salad, egg salad, tuna salad, or seafood salad.
- Soft or Mexican-style cheeses such as feta, brie, Camembert, blue cheese, queso blanco, queso fresco, and Panela unless the label clearly states, "MADE WITH PASTEURIZED MILK."
- Foods that have passed their use-by or expiration date.



In addition, follow the four basic steps to food safety:

- Clean – Wash hands, utensils and surfaces often. Use hot, soapy water. Clean raw vegetables with a vegetable brush under running water.
- Separate – Don't cross contaminate. Use separate cutting boards for raw meat and ready-to-eat foods, such as bread and vegetables.
- Cook – Cook food to proper temperatures. Use a food

thermometer to make sure your meat, poultry and egg dishes are cooked to a safe temperature.

- Chill - Refrigerate promptly.

U.S. Department of Health of Human Services Center for Disease Control Website: www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/ Information on outbreaks, reports from recent food safety conferences, environmental hazards, FAQ's and publications and articles for employers and employees to learn more about food safety

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FOOD SAFETY FROM THE CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE *Continued from page 1*

employee's appearance? Is the employee wearing a neat and clean uniform? A clean apron? If not, do you wonder what happens when the employee takes a break, eats lunch, or goes to the restroom?

Hair control is often not adequately addressed by food managers. What a consumer hopes to see is neatly trimmed, shiny clean hair, well controlled under a cap or hat. Remember, consumers are always unhappy to find a stranger's hair in their food.

If chipped nail polish on a food service worker has ever caught your eye, have you wondered where the little chips are? Although the fashionable trend is for highly polished nails, nail polish should not be allowed in the food service environment.

Policies on earrings and other jewelry are also important. All jewelry can harbor microorganisms that can result in foodborne illness, including rings and watches. Dangling earrings, lip, nose and eyebrow rings can transfer bacteria to food if an employee fiddles with jewelry and then touches food or food preparation surfaces. Did you know that individuals with a tongue piercing tends to spit more often?

Step back and watch how your employees handle food. The transfer of microorganisms from

one surface to another is known as cross-contamination, and it can happen very easily.

Proper hand washing with hot water and soap for 15-20 seconds helps control cross contamination. Dry hands with a single use towel and use the towel to turn off the faucet.

One basic rule: food should never be touched with bare hands unless it is going to be cooked after handling and before serving. Food that will be served without cooking should be prepared with gloved hands, or handled only with utensils or parchment paper.

For example, meatballs might be shaped with bare hands because they will be cooked fully before being served. Salads and sandwiches, however, should be prepared with gloved hands. Ice cream cones should be wrapped or handled with paper. If an employee has a cut or skin irritation, gloves should be worn when preparing any foods, even those that will be cooked before serving.

Improper glove use can reflect a lack of understanding or poor employee training. Watch employees who are wearing gloves while they prepare foods. If a non-food surface is touched during food preparation (such as the telephone or money), gloves should be replaced before returning to the food



preparation task.

Training your staff appropriately can make a tremendous difference in the success of your business, as well as reduce the risk that someone may become ill from food prepared at your establishment. Positive public perception and confidence of food safety will assure repeat business...just what you want!

For additional information about safe food practices, contact your local UNH Cooperative Extension office. Inquire about our program, Safety Awareness in the Food Environment (SAFE). The training is available for your employees at no charge. UNH Cooperative Extension also teaches the ServSafe® course; the cost is \$135.

