Food for Port

2017 edition

Welcome to Port Stephens Council's 2017 Food for Port newsletter. Council's Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) have undertaken about 600 inspections in the past 2016/17 financial year. Council would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the businesses that achieved a satisfactory inspection result - well done!

In this newsletter we will address some of the common questions that our EHOs have been asked over the past financial year.

Quiz Time! True or false?

1. Using more sanitiser is better than using a small amount.
2. A copy of the food safety supervisor certificate must be available at the premises and produced for inspection if requested by an authorised officer.
3. A large pot of curry can take up to 24 hours to cool down to 5°C in the fridge.
4. Freezing food kills harmful bacteria that make people sick.
5. The best way to defrost frozen meat is to leave it on the sink.
6. Food poisoning can cause nerve and kidney damage.

Thermometers in Food Businesses

Are you using your thermometer at the right times? Thermometers should be used when:

1. Cooking and re-heating potentially hazardous food
2. Undertaking regular temperature checks of your refrigeration units to ensure that they are keeping the food at 5°C or below
3. Cooling foods
4. Receiving deliveries

Cleaning and sanitising your thermometer

As a probe thermometer is inserted into food, the probe must be cleaned and sanitised before it is used to measure the temperature of different food.

An easy way to sanitise your probe is by using an alcoholic swab, which can be purchased from most chemists. Alternatively, you can use food-grade sanitiser, but you must make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Maintaining your thermometer

A thermometer must be maintained to ensure that is in good working order. This includes ensuring that batteries are replaced as soon as they go flat and replacing it if it breaks.

Thermometers must also be calibrated on regular basis to ensure that they give an accurate reading. To calibrate your thermometer, refer back to the instructions that came with your thermometer, or ask the manufacturer or business where you purchased the thermometer. There are also businesses that specialise in calibrating equipment such as thermometers.

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Chemical sanitisers

Chemical sanitisers can be purchased from a chemical supplier. To locate a supplier, try looking for 'cleaning products and supplies' online or in the telephone directory.

Things to consider when buying a chemical sanitiser:

1. Is the sanitiser 'food grade' (safe for food contact surfaces)?
2. Will the sanitiser leave a residue that will need to be rinsed or wiped off?
3. How much do I need to use?
4. Can I use the sanitiser on all surfaces and equipment?
5. How long is the contact time?
6. If the sanitiser needs to be diluted with water in a spray bottle, how long will the solution last for?

Things to consider when using a chemical sanitiser:

1. Sanitisers must be used at the correct dilution rates. You should always follow the dilution rates on the label or as directed by the manufacturer
2. Check to see if your sanitiser is 'no rinse' or if you need to rinse/wipe it off after application
3. Check best before dates
4. Make sure that all staff are trained in the correct use of sanitisers
5. Sanitisers must be stored away from food to minimise the risk of contamination

For further information on the process of cleaning and sanitising see the following NSW Food Authority fact sheet: http://bit.ly/2tjjZzS

Cooking in bulk

Extra care must be taken when preparing and cooking food in bulk. Bulk food that is not cooked, cooled and stored properly can cause dangerous bacteria and toxins to grow and may make customers who eat this food unwell. Food that is often cooked in bulk include rice, soups, sauces, curries and casseroles.

Cooking

When cooking food in bulk you must ensure that all potentially hazardous foods are cooked thoroughly. Cooking will help to reduce dangerous bacteria to safe levels if it is done properly. It should also be mentioned that some food-poisoning bacteria can protect themselves from cooking and while they will not be present in enough numbers to make someone sick just after the food is cooked, they can start growing again if the cooked food is left at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C for too long. This is why cooling cooked food quickly is so important.

Cooling and Storage

Food must be cooled down to 5°C within 6 hours. You should monitor this cooling process using your thermometer. It is also good practice to record the temperatures and times the temperature was checked. To reduce cooling times:

1. Remove cooked food from the heat source as soon as the food is cooked
2. Food should be initially cooled outside of the refrigerator. It must be placed in the refrigerator as soon as the food has cooled to 60°C
3. Transfer the food to smaller and/or shallow containers
4. Use rapid cooling equipment such as a blast chiller or a ice water bath
5. Cut large joints of meat and poultry into portions
6. Stir liquid food frequently
7. Ensure that there is enough space around food containers to allow for cool air circulation

Reheating

Heat and serve immediately
Reheat food rapidly
Serve food immediately

Hot holding
Rapidly reheat food to 60°C or above (reheating should not be done in a bain marie or pie warmer)
If reheated food cannot be kept at 60°C or above use 2 hour 4 hour rule

Quiz answers: 1=F, 2=T, 3=T, 4=F, 5=F, 6=T