The mission of the Thurston County Public Health Department is to protect and promote the health of the Thurston County community, now and in the future.

**Culinary Chronicles**

**Update on the Washington State Food Code**

In this issue of the Culinary Chronicle we will be focusing on the upcoming changes to the State Food Code. This code goes into effect May 2, 2005. The new code adopts the 2001 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Model Food Code with some specific amendments and additions.

Thurston County Environmental Health Specialist and Office Support staff have attended training provided by Washington State to assist in answering questions from food establishments. We have also mailed out a postcard to food service facilities in Thurston County to advise them of the change. At our food handler classes we are now handing out a brochure which highlights the changes and additions to the revised Washington State Food Code. We are hoping for a smooth transition to the new State Food Rules.

We have also begun the review of Thurston County's Article II, Rules and Regulations Governing Food Service. Part of this review will be asking for input from the industry here in Thurston County. We will provide more information regarding this part of the process at a later date.

**Make sure you take this opportunity to share these articles and changes with your management and staff to help promote a smooth transition into the new code requirements.**

**PERSON IN CHARGE (PIC) @ Your Food Service Facility**

A lack of food safety knowledge can have serious consequences to your customers and your business. After May 2nd, a lack of food safety knowledge will also be reflected on your inspection report.

In the outgoing food rule, the owner and the Person in Charge (PIC) shared many of the responsibilities of the establishment, but were not required to be in the facility at all times.

Beginning May 2, 2005, every permitted food establishment must have a designated PIC on the premises during all operating hours.

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The PIC will be required to:
1. have food safety knowledge,
2. take appropriate preventive and corrective actions (including excluding ill food workers), and
3. demonstrate knowledge to the regulatory authority.

1. Food Safety Knowledge
The designation of a PIC during all hours of operation is intended to ensure the continuous presence of someone able to identify and prevent high-risk practices to avoid the transmission of foodborne disease to the community.

The PIC must be able to recognize hazards that may contribute to foodborne illness and be able to take appropriate preventive and corrective actions.

The PIC must have sound knowledge of the basics of proper food handling, the requirements of the food rule, and the operating procedures within the establishment.

2. Preventive and Corrective Actions
The PIC must ensure that all provisions of the food rule are followed, including:
- Food preparation and storage occur in proper areas.
- Employees effectively wash their hands as needed.
- Foods are received in good condition and from approved sources.
- Potentially hazardous foods are properly prepared, cooked, cooled, handled and stored.
- Consumer advisories are posted if needed.
- Proper methods are used to sanitize surfaces, utensils and equipment.
- Ill employees and unauthorized people are excluded or restricted as appropriate. Employees with illnesses transmissible through food are reported to the health authority.
- Bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods is prevented.
- Employees have valid food worker cards and are properly trained for their duties.

3. Demonstration of Knowledge
During an inspection, the PIC will need to demonstrate knowledge to the inspector. Knowledge must be demonstrated in one of three ways:
- Compliance with the Code. No “Red” High Risk violations noted on the current inspection report.
- Certification. Valid certificate from an ANSI-accredited manager certification course (such as ServSafe®).
- Knowledge. Correctly answers food safety questions asked by the inspector.

What kind of questions will be asked of the Person In Charge?

If the establishment has “Red” High Risk violations during its inspection and the PIC does not have a valid manager certificate, the PIC must correctly respond to questions regarding food safety practices. The regulatory authority may not ask questions that do not relate to the food handling in your operation.

Depending on the foods prepared at your establishment, the questions will be from areas of knowledge such as these:

Foodborne Disease
- Relationships between foodborne disease, hand-contact, personal hygiene, and cross contamination
- Prevention of transmission by an ill food employee
- The modes of transmission

Potentially Hazardous Foods
- The hazards involved in eating undercooked animal products
- Temperatures and times for receiving, holding, cooling, cooking, and reheating

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Contamination Prevention
- Proper food storage and handling
- The procedure for cleaning and sanitizing utensils and other food contact surfaces
- Protecting the water source, including the prevention of cross connections
- Identifying toxic materials and ensuring safe handling, storage, and disposal

Operating Procedures
- Food safety procedures in the establishment
- Explanation of the HACCP plan, if required at the establishment
- The responsibilities of food workers, PICs, and the regulatory authority as stated in the food rule

Temperature Danger Zone

The “Danger Zone” is the temperature range in which most bacteria are able to grow in potentially hazardous foods. The Danger Zone currently used in Washington is 45°F-140°F.

Because several bacteria that cause foodborne illness have been shown to grow at 45°F, the new code will lower the required cold holding temperature.

**The revised Danger Zone will be 41°F to 140°F**

What if your refrigerated units can’t keep food at 41°F? If your current equipment is able to keep food 45°F but unable to keep food 41°F, you will have until May 2010 to replace the cooler with compliant equipment.

**Two Notes:**

1. The five-year grace period is only for machines unable to meet the requirement— if your cooler is mechanically able to keep foods 41°F, you will be required to adjust it to meet the required temperature.

2. If your cooler is unable to keep your foods 45°F or colder, it must not be used for potentially hazardous foods.

Why isn’t the new colder temperature required for eggs? Shell eggs can still be stored at an ambient temperature of 45°F or colder because the bacteria of concern [Salmonella Enteritidis] is inhibited at 45°F. This temperature is also consistent with the USDA temperature requirement for eggs during transport.

**Potentially Hazardous Foods**

Potentially Hazardous Foods [PHF] are foods that require time and temperature control to prevent bacterial growth or production of bacterial toxins. PHF must be kept out of the Danger Zone for food safety.

With the new food code, cooked fruits and vegetables will be added to the list of Potentially Hazardous Foods.

**Potentially Hazardous Foods include:**

**Animal products:**
- meat, fish, and poultry
- dairy products, including custard pies
- eggs (except for air-dried, hard cooked eggs with an intact shell)

**Fruits and vegetables:**
- raw seed sprouts
- sliced melons
- garlic and other fresh herbs in oil
- **cooked fruits or vegetables**

**Cooked starches:**
- potatoes, legumes, beans, rice

Why were cooked fruits and vegetables added to the list of PHF? Because a plant’s natural defenses are often destroyed with cooking, cooked plant foods may allow disease-causing bacteria to grow.

Although fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables are ready to eat at any temperature, they must be cooked to 140°F if they will be hot-held. The hot holding temperature for cooked plant foods will also be 140°F to prevent the growth of disease-causing bacteria that might be present.
Workshop on The New Food Code — Is There A Demand For Training?

As you know on May 2, 2005 the new Washington State Food Service Code becomes effective. To help us all become aware of the new requirements we are asking for your input on providing workshops in Thurston County. We can, if the demand is there, offer three classes in April that will be approximately two hours long to provide information on the key changes that will be required. These workshops will be a joint effort between WSU Thurston County Extension Service and Thurston County Public Health & Social Services. If you would like these classes provided here in Thurston County please call Karen Neilson at (360) 754-3355 x 7392 to express your opinion.

Food Handler Classes at the Courthouse

Place:
Thurston County Courthouse
Building #1, Room 152
2000 Lakeridge Drive SW
Olympia WA 98502

Time:
Tuesday, 3:20 PM & 5:20 PM
Thursday, 8:20 AM
1st Thursday, 7:00 PM
3rd Saturday, 10:00 AM

Cost:
$10.00 cash or check (All returned checks will be charged a $15.00 service fee.)

Yelm Food Handler Classes

We provide two food handler classes in Yelm each month. We are there on the Second and last Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm. The classes are held at the Yelm Senior/Multi-Purpose Center located at 201 Yelm Avenue East.

In November and December 2005 we will only be having one class each month due to the holidays. Our classes will be held on November 16th and in December on the 14th — ONLY one class each month!

(If you need a Food & Beverage Worker's Manual they can be picked up at the Yelm Senior Center, Yelm City Hall, and Yelm UCBO.)
Employee Health and the New Code

Healthy food workers are one of the most important ingredients in foodborne illness prevention. Even with strong food safety practices, ill food employees may unintentionally spread illness if they work while sick.

To protect public health, ill food employees must either be restricted from certain food handling activities or excluded from working in food establishments.

Employee Illness
According to the food rule, ill employees have:

- symptoms of a gastrointestinal infection (such as diarrhea, vomiting or jaundice);
- diagnosed infections from one of the 'Big 4' (Salmonella, Shigella, Shiga toxin-producing E. coli, or hepatitis A);
- infected, uncovered wounds; or
- discharges from the eyes, nose or mouth (persistent sneezing, coughing or runny nose) even when caused by non-infectious sources such as allergies.

Under the new rule, an ill food worker must report these conditions to the Person in Charge (PIC) and be restricted from food handling.

Responsibilities of the PIC
The new food rule requires that PICs:
1. Inform employees of the need to report the above conditions to the PIC;
2. Recognize the diseases that are transmitted by foods;
3. Restrict ill employees from working with food; and
4. Notify the regulatory authority when a food employee has jaundice or an infection that can be transmitted through food.

Diseases Transmitted Through Food
A list of diseases spread by infected food workers is published each year. Available on the Federal Register, the list includes Norovirus, Hepatitis A, Salmonella, Shigella, Staph. aureus, Strep. pyogenes, certain types of E. coli, and a few other, less common, infections.

Restriction and Exclusion
Restriction
When an ill employee is restricted, he or she may not work around unpackaged foods, food preparation areas, food distribution areas, or clean utensils.

Unless excluded by the regulatory authority, a restricted employee may work where there is wrapped food and wrapped single-use articles, or with soiled utensils and soiled food equipment. Examples of allowable activities include running the cash register, seating patrons, stocking dry goods, bussing tables, and performing building maintenance.

A restricted employee may return to regular food service activities when the symptoms of illness are gone.

Exclusion
Some illnesses (such as the Big 4) require that the regulatory authority exclude the ill employee from working in the establishment until medically cleared.

If a facility has different sections (such as in a department store) the employee that is excluded from food service may be permitted to work in an area that is away from the food preparation, service, or storage areas.

Restriction, Exclusion and the ADA
The food rule requires that ill food employees be restricted or excluded, but the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that employers make reasonable efforts to accommodate the employees by finding alternative duties that do not threaten public health or cause an undue hardship on the business.

A guide to help food service employers comply with both the FDA restriction and exclusion requirements and the ADA’s requirements for accommodation is available from the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

www.eeoc.gov/facts/restaurant_guide.html

Other medical conditions
Certain medical conditions, such as Crohn’s disease, hepatitis C and irritable bowel syndrome, can cause gastrointestinal symptoms that do not spread illness. If an employee with these conditions provides medical documentation to the regulatory authority, the employee may work in food service without special restriction.
Advisory For Your Customers

Consumer Advisory
The current food code requires that animal products and unpasteurized, packaged juices be identified ("disclosed") on the menu, label or a sign if they are served undercooked or raw. The new food code will require this disclosure AND a reminder that the undercooked food item may cause illness.

Why is Consumer Advisory required?
Eating raw or undercooked animal foods and unpasteurized juices poses an increased risk of foodborne illness, especially for vulnerable people. The intent of the Consumer Advisory is to notify consumers of the increased risk so they are better able to make informed ordering decisions.

Who needs to post a Consumer Advisory?
All food establishments that serve raw or undercooked animal foods or unpasteurized, packaged juices are required to post a Consumer Advisory.

Animal foods traditionally served raw or undercooked include:
- hamburgers and steaks, cooked to order
- oysters and other shellfish
- fish (sushi, sashimi and ceviche)
- eggs served undercooked (fried, poached, sunny-side up, "runny")
- eggs undercooked as ingredients (sauces, eggnog, tiramisu, mousse, meringue pie, Caesar salad dressing, fresh mayonnaise)
- meats ordered "rare" (carpaccio, steak tartare)

Are there any options to putting the reminder on the menu?
An option to printing the reminder statement on the menu is to publicly provide a Consumer Advisory brochure that meets the guidelines set by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The brochure must be readily accessible to consumers—they can get it without having to ask for it—prior to placing their food orders.

What if I only have raw oysters on the menu?
Consumer Advisories may be tailored to be product-specific if a food establishment serves only certain animal foods raw or undercooked. For example, a bar serving raw oysters on the half-shell, but no other raw or undercooked animal food, could change the reminder to: "Consuming raw oysters may increase your risk of foodborne illness."

More information on signage language is available on page 7.

Northwest Food Business 101 Workshop

If you are interested in starting or expanding your food business and want current information about that process, WSU Thurston County Extension Service is sponsoring a video teleconference to provide you with the important details. The class is designed to provide an overview of the key requirements such as a business plan, marketing, goals and expectations, with additional emphasis on food processing and packaging options, legal requirements, and food safety. The class will be held on Thursday, March 24 from 12:30 - 5:00 pm at the Washington State University Energy office located at 925 Plum Street SE Bldg No 4, Olympia. For additional information about this workshop you can contact the WSU Thurston County Extension Service representative, Zena Edwards at (360) 786-5445. You can also register online at: http://fic.oregonstate.edu.
Consumer Advisory: A consumer advisory is a publicly-posted notice that certain ready-to-eat foods pose a health risk because they are not processed to destroy pathogens.

Consumer Advisory consists of two parts: Disclosure and Reminder.

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<th><strong>Disclosure</strong>—identification of the animal foods served undercooked—must:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• be written</td>
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<td>• be of the menu (or otherwise presented to customers in writing at the time they place their order)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Identify the food items that are served raw or undercooked</td>
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Examples of disclosure statements include:
- "Oysters on the half-shell (raw oysters)"
- "Our steaks are cooked to order"
- "Raw-egg Caesar salad"
- "Caesar Salad*"

*Contains raw or undercooked eggs.*

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<th><strong>Reminder</strong>—statement of the health risk of consuming these foods—must:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• be written</td>
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<tr>
<td>• be printed on the menu where customers can easily find it (preferably on the page where the first undercooked item appears) or otherwise presented to customers</td>
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Examples of reminder statements include:
- "Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions."
- "Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness."
- "Regarding the safety of these items, written information is available upon request." [A handout that meets FDA guidelines must be available for this option.]

To comply with the Consumer Advisory provision, the disclosure and reminder need to be publicly available and readable so that consumers may see the message before placing their order. The language of the disclosure and reminder must be in the same language used for the menu items and must be in readable size and format.

**DIRTY HANDS SPREAD DISEASE**
**WASH THEM**

**NEW DANGER ZONE:**
41°F TO 140°F

**Website Information**
For more information on the new Food Rule please go to our website at www.co.thurston.wa.us/health. Go to the Environmental Health drop down menu and click on Food Safety/Food Handler. We have links there to the State Department of Health's website and a brochure to download on the major changes.