

Welcome to Flavours

Autumn Edition 2018

What is food safety culture?

Food safety culture in a business is how everyone (owners, managers, employees) thinks and acts in their daily job to make sure that the food they make or serve is safe. It's about having pride in producing safe food every time, recognising that a good quality product must be safe to eat. Food safety is your top priority.

A strong food safety culture comes from people understanding the importance of making safe food and committing to doing whatever it takes, every time. It starts at the top but needs everyone's support across the business.

Why is it important?

A good food safety culture can protect:

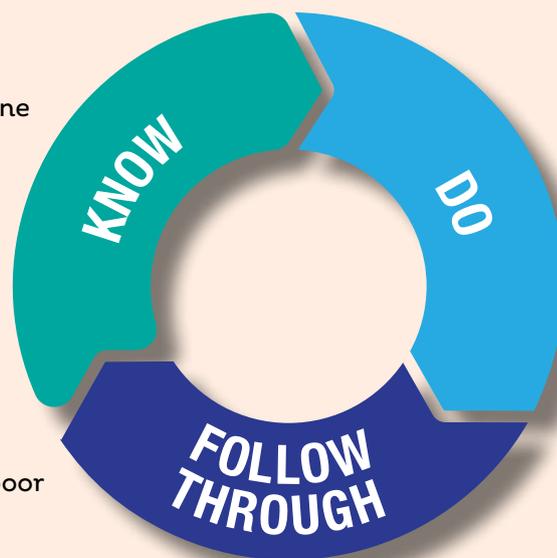
- consumers from foodborne illness
- your brand's reputation
- your business from financial loss.

The facts

- 4.1 million cases of foodborne illness (each year) with contaminated food causing about 30,800 hospitalisations and 76 deaths
- 70 food recalls a year, mostly due to contamination by disease-causing microorganisms, or allergens that were not declared on the label.

Unsafe food can be linked to poor hygiene practices or mistakes by people handling food. This can occur, even when people are trained and businesses are inspected and audited.

Food businesses need to focus on people as well as processes: especially what the people who handle our food know and what they do in their everyday work in their workplaces.



What does a strong food safety culture look like?

Free poster to download foodstandards.gov.au/foodsafety

New South Wales Bakery Fined \$122,000

The proprietors of a bakery that sold food contaminated with Salmonella that poisoned over 200 people in 2016 were fined \$61,000 each and ordered to pay \$7,199 in costs.

During the investigation the premises were closed until the NSW Food Authority were satisfied that the skills and knowledge of staff had improved.

NSW Food Authority chief executive Dr Lisa Szabo said the fines were a reminder that proper food safety is crucial.

"Consumers have the right to have confidence and certainty that the food they purchase and consume is safe to eat and won't harm the health of them or their family," Dr Szabo said.

Allergen Awareness

Do you know what an allergen is and why they are so dangerous?

Did you know that 70 per cent of all food recalls are now due to the presence of undeclared allergens? And that anaphylaxis due to allergens will soon become notifiable?

In the next issue of Flavours we will be dedicating a whole edition to allergens and how you can reduce the risk of an allergic reaction in your customers.

If you can't wait there is an excellent online training program called "All about Allergens" for food service providers. It can be accessed via the internet foodallergytraining.org.au

Focus on: Glove use Vs Hand washing

Under The Food Standard Code 3.2.2 gloves are not mandated and, if not used carefully, can actually be quite dangerous!

Our hands naturally have a range of normal bacteria on the surface and wearing gloves seals in these bacteria and in time our hands start to sweat allowing the bacteria to multiply. When the gloves are removed the bacteria can be distributed in droplets on to open food and food contact surfaces causing cross contamination.

Think of your hands as lethal weapons!

The most important barrier for food safety is hand washing.

Hands must be washed before and after each different task (see the box) and **before putting on gloves**.

Anti-bacterial soap should NOT be used.

Hand sanitisers should NOT be used instead of hand washing as they do not work as well as washing hands with soap and warm running water.

Hands MUST ONLY be washed in the proper hand wash basin. DO NOT use the cleaning sinks or food preparation sink.

Drying hands is just as important as washing them as bacteria thrive in damp environments. Paper towels can dry hands efficiently, remove bacteria effectively and cause less contamination than other methods of hand drying.

Food Handlers can become complacent when using gloves and wear them for all tasks believing that they do not have to wash their hands between tasks.

Gloves are great for cutting up potentially hazardous food (for example, meat or fish) and making sandwiches but must be discarded immediately after completing the task.

Use tongs or other utensils to handle ready to eat foods (such as salads).

Food Standards Code 3.2.2

15(2) A food handler must wash his or her hands in accordance with subclause (4):

- (a) whenever his or her hands are likely to be a source of contamination of food;
- (b) immediately before working with ready-to-eat foods after handling raw food; and
- (c) immediately after using the toilet.

15(3) A food handler must, when engaging in a food handling operation that involves unprotected food or surfaces likely to come into contact with food, wash his or her hands in accordance with subclause (4):

- (a) before commencing or re-commencing handling food;
- (b) immediately after smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking or using tobacco or similar substances; and
- (c) after touching his or her hair, scalp or a body opening.

15(4) A food handler must, whenever washing his or her hands:

- (a) use the hand washing facilities provided;
- (b) thoroughly clean his or her hands using soap or other effective means, and warm running water; and

- (c) thoroughly dry his or her hands on a single use towel or in another way that is not likely to transfer pathogenic microorganisms to the hands.



New Coordinator Public Health

For nearly 17 years Geoff Fraser has been at the helm of the Public Health Unit. Following a four month secondment Geoff has resigned from the City of Greater Dandenong to take up a similar role with Baw Baw Shire Council. We wish Geoff well for the new challenges that lie ahead.

The recruitment process is well underway for a replacement. The name of the successful applicant will be announced in the next issue of Flavours.

Listeria in Rockmelons

Six people have died and another 13 were seriously ill after eating rockmelon (cantaloupe) that was contaminated with Listeria.

Those at greatest risk are the young, the old, people with diabetes, pregnant women and people with a compromised immune system. For most healthy people, whilst the illness is unpleasant, it rarely produces serious health complications. The incubation period, the time between eating the contaminated food and showing the first symptom, can be up to a month.

Once the food agencies in Victoria and New South Wales identified the single grower in NSW a food recall was initiated. Only rockmelons listed in the recall were affected.

Other foods that support Listeria are soft cheeses, deli meats, dressings like mayonnaise and other fruit that grows in contact with the ground.

If handling fresh rockmelons you should wash your hands with hot soapy water before and after handling the fruit, wash and sanitise cutting boards, knives, dishes and counter tops etc.

Discard any damaged parts of the fruit.



Love is not an ingredient!

We all know that your food is made with love. Of course it is. It's made with your very heart and soul. However, the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the USA has reprimanded a Massachusetts bakery for actually listing "love" in the list of ingredients for their granola. In their letter to the bakery the FDA states that 'love' is not a common or usual name of an ingredient, and is considered to be intervening material.

Similar rules apply in Australia where Food Standards Code 1.2.4 requires ingredients to be listed by common, descriptive or generic name.

Food Containing Hemp "caveat hemptor"

The prohibition on using hemp was lifted last year and manufacturers are wasting no time in producing a range of food products containing hemp oil or seed. Products such as chocolate, brownies, cereal and beer have all been launched.

Derived from the cannabis sativa plant, hemp that is permitted for use in food has an especially low level of the psychoactive chemical THC. Hemp seeds, oil and flowers are highly nutritious sources of plant based protein, omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids.

Hemp product packaging cannot use an image or representation of the cannabis plant and the word 'cannabis' cannot be used to avoid any association between hemp food products and the drug.

Noble Park store fined \$35,000 and the proprietor convicted.

The proprietor faced 17 charges under the Food Act brought by the City of Greater Dandenong in October 2017. The charges were as a result of an inspection carried out after we received a complaint in April

last year. Charges included an accumulation of blood, dirt and food waste in the coolroom, presence of food waste and dead insects throughout the premises, uncovered meat being stored below a bench and evidence that food handlers were not washing their hands.

The Magistrate's remarks are a reminder to all food businesses "Other business owners particularly in the food handling area are under a very onerous obligation to the community at large."

Award for Team Excellence and Innovation

Each year Environmental Health Professional Australia (EHPA) make a number of awards to individuals and teams that make a significant contribution to protecting the health of their community.

At the national symposium held at the end of last year, the City of Greater Dandenong's Public Health Unit was recognised for the work that we have been doing with local manufacturers and with businesses from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds.

On hand to collect the Robert L Handby Award 2017 for Team Excellence and Innovation were (left to right) Meagan Hibbert, Rebecca Jones and Susy Cockbill.



Seagulls in Dandenong

A friendly reminder to please dispose of your food waste appropriately.

- Empty your rubbish into your bins regularly
- Keep the lids closed at all times
- Make sure that the bins don't leak
- Pick up any rubbish that falls onto the floor
- Don't overfill the bins
- Make sure the bins are emptied regularly