

Food & Safety

BULLETIN

Summer 2015

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Other ways to contact us:

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torbay.gov.uk/foodsafety



Welcome to the 8th edition of our Food & Safety Bulletin, included are articles of interest on food safety plus health and safety that are likely to be relevant to your business.

If you would like any help or advice on any of the articles in this edition please contact a member of the Team on the details below.

Wishing you a successful 2015 season

Helen Perkins - Principal Environmental Health Officer, Community Safety

Fruit Cocktail of Bacteria

Fresh fruit has been associated with a number of foodborne outbreaks in recent years. Contamination can come from the environment when growing, for example from the transfer of pathogens from animals or untreated manure, use of contaminated water or by cross-contamination from food-handlers and equipment. Bacteria associated with such fruit include E.coli, Listeria and Staphylococcus aureus.

A study of pre-cut fruit products from catering and retail premises in the UK was carried out to assess their microbiological safety. Over three months 1188 samples of ready-to-eat pre-cut fruit were collected from retail and catering premises across the UK and 99% were of satisfactory microbiological quality. However, four samples were of an unsatisfactory quality (due to Listeria monocytogenes and E.coli), and five samples were of a borderline quality due to the presence of E.coli, S. aureus or L. Monocytogenes. Listeria species were detected in a further 54 samples at levels below the threshold considered to be 'borderline' or 'unsatisfactory'.

This study shows that, overall, the microbiological quality of ready-to-eat pre-cut fruit is good. However, the presence of Listeria species in 5% of samples highlights the need for good hygiene during preparation and storage of these food products.

Listeria can grow even at normal refrigeration temperatures so it can be a concern in ready-to-eat foods due to cross-contamination risks. Therefore it is important to use foods within date codes where applicable, refrigerate between 0-5°C, avoid cross-contamination when storing and thoroughly wash fruit and vegetables including salads. Hand-washing is especially important to prevent cross-contamination between food products.



Local businesses help with pilot project for tackling childhood obesity

No one will have failed to notice the barrage of media coverage on obesity and childhood obesity in the UK. Concerns have been raised for both the health of individuals and the wider costs to communities and the NHS in particular. How to address this ranges from the rather simplistic, 'it's simple just watch what you eat' to the more established, 'our whole society and way of life makes it difficult to follow a good diet and be active enough'.

The general consensus is that everyone from the individual; to food manufacturers; planning departments and local authorities have a part to play. As a starting point the Food Safety Team have begun a trial project, which focuses on childhood obesity and a selection of local cafes.

'Healthy Meal Choices for Children' was borne out of the need to start to tackle this issue locally. We started by talking to businesses and parents about the challenges they face so we could see what help we could offer to allow them to implement changes to their menus.

The project began with the following:

1. Identification of a selection of local independent food businesses willing to take part in the pilot
2. Talking to parents at local playgroups about children's meals and what is on offer in Torbay
3. Conducting an online survey aimed at parents across Torbay to gather information about children's meal choices when eating out in Torbay

Food businesses invited to be part of the pilot had to have a food hygiene score between 3-5. They were perceived to have a focus on children and were independent businesses (not part of a chain). Of those approached only one declined.

Playgroups in Torquay held focus groups with parents to find out what they wanted for their child when eating out. Key findings were that parents want to pay less than £3 for a children's meal; unprocessed, simple food; half portions of adult meals; and snack plates were especially popular. Snack plates are where parents can choose a selection of items to have from a list such as raisins, carrot sticks, hummus and cherry tomatoes. This was echoed by one of the businesses who noted that parents who came to eat in their cafe often

brought these items to feed their children. Parents were also more likely to eat in places that had baby changing facilities, high chairs and children's activities such as colouring. Parents advised that they mainly use MumsNet and Facebook to find out about places to eat out with children.

The results of the on-line survey will be covered in the next edition of the Food Safety Newsletter.

Businesses participating in the project had an initial assessment of their current menus and nutritional knowledge and were encouraged to talk about what part they feel they have to play in the obesity issue.



Free nutritional training was given to the businesses by a registered dietician followed by a session on what support businesses felt they needed to make changes to their children's menus. Businesses asked us to develop a selection of menus and also wanted to involve children in the process. A competition is being run with local primary schools asking children to devise a healthy pasta dish. The entries will be judged by pupils at Coombe Pafford School. The winner will be announced in June with the aim of having the winning pasta dish featured on the menus of the pilot businesses. It is hoped that the healthy children's meal choices will be on local menus by the start of the Summer. Support with the recipe development was given by Collaton St Mary School. Any additional costs incurred will be covered, such as reprinting menus and a selection of activity packs offered to the cafes.

A review of the project will take place in the autumn, this is a positive step in the right direction for the children and visitors of Torbay.

Many thanks to the business which are taking part:-

Jades Coffee Shop, Dots Pantry, Tudors, The Yellow Frog Cafe, Living Coasts, The Play Cafe, Savva's, Crusty Loaf, Shaul's Bakery, Paignton Zoo.



Gas safety in catering establishments in Torbay

As part of our work in inspecting your business for food hygiene, we have also been looking at the gas safety of equipment over the past year. This project was done across Devon as there had been issues identified in this area. The focus on routine health and safety work has been greatly reduced in recent years to reflect the move towards self regulation.

A total of 968 "Gas Safety" interventions were undertaken, with a total of 268 instances where identified as "matters of concern" under one of the three following headings:

- Lack of Maintenance - Where defects were identified with the system and there was no record or regular maintenance by a competent individual.
- Out of Scope Works - Where there was evidence that works had been undertaken on the gas system by someone without the necessary qualifications.
- Unregistered Engineer - Where work had been undertaken by an individual or company with no recognised "Gas Safe" qualifications.

These issues were dealt with by a variety of means including written warnings and improvement notices requiring work to be done. In the case of unregistered engineers, given that sub standard work could result in serious personal injury and that peripatetic work is enforced by the Health and Safety Executive, these matters were referred immediately to the relevant authorities. The affected businesses were then faced with commissioning a qualified engineer to certify their gas systems.

So please install and maintain your equipment using a properly qualified person for this work. You can get details of qualified engineers from the Gas Safe website, making sure that you check under their qualifications they are able to work on commercial equipment.



Since last July Torbay Council regulatory services (food safety, health and safety, licensing & trading standards) have been involved in a programme called Better Business for All (BBfA), which aims to create a level playing field for businesses across Devon & Somerset.

Since last November all of the Devon & Somerset Local Authorities have joined the partnership along with Devon & Somerset Trading Standards and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue. Together we will be working to ensure consistent delivery of our services and better access to business advice and support across the two Counties so that local businesses can prosper and succeed.

If you would like any more information about the work we are doing, if you have any comments about the way in which Torbay regulatory services could improve our services, or if you would like free, impartial advice on regulatory matters then please do not hesitate to get in touch
sara.desbois@torbay.gov.uk

Beware the Allergens

Food Allergen Labelling - It is your legal responsibility to know!

From the 13th December 2014 it became your legal responsibility to action food allergen labelling law and provide the correct allergen information about ingredients in the food you prepare and serve.

The changes in the food allergen law means you and your staff will not be able to say that you don't know what allergens are in the food you produce anymore.

You will need:

- 1) **A signpost/poster** in your premises with advice on how to obtain information e.g. Before ordering please speak to our staff about your requirements. Or put allergen information on your menu's.
- 2) **Be clear about what allergen(s)** if a certain allergen covers more than one possible product like cereals and crustaceans, you will need to state which one your food contains e.g. wheat and prawns.
- 3) **Keep staff trained and informed** to be able to offer your customers guidance if they get confused or unsure about the food allergen labelling.
- 4) **Ensure your information is up to date** if you change a supplier or switch to a different product, make sure you go through the labels on the packaging and update the information on your menu.

Torbay Trading Standards are offering two Allergen Awareness Training courses at Upton Baptist Church, Torquay on the 18th June 2015, one at 2.00-3.00 p.m and the second 3.30-4.30 p.m.

Please contact
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Further information at
www.torbay.gov.uk



Sous Vide Cooking

Sous vide is French for 'under vacuum' and describes a method of cooking food in vacuum sealed plastic pouches at low temperatures for various time periods. This method is said to maintain the integrity of the ingredients and therefore should produce foods with enhanced flavours and textures. However this method can carry potentially significant food safety risks.

The main issue with the use of sous vide is that it cooks slowly and as a result food spends a long time in the temperature danger zone between 5°C and 63°C where food poisoning bacteria can multiply.

A minimum of not less than 60°C for 45 minutes should be used to cook foods using sous vide. In addition, this method also involves the storage of food under low oxygen conditions, which means the risk from growth of Clostridium botulinum bacteria should also be considered in relation to storage temperature, product shelf life and safety of these products.

It is for the food business operator (FBO) to demonstrate that they have sufficient systems in place and evidence (verification) to show that the sous vide food they produce is safe to eat. The FBO's sous vide method needs to be a safe method of food production which has been documented and appropriately validated (evidence obtained that the control measures are effective, especially the critical control points e.g. cooking stage). The FBO should document the exact method to be followed consistently each time for each product and verification should be carried out on a regular basis (for example time/temperature monitoring of the actual food product – not the water bath temperature).

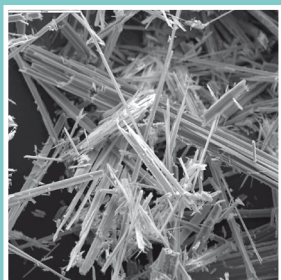
If you are using sous vide as a cooking method in your business your EHO will want to see the following paperwork as a minimum in addition to your standard documented food safety management system (e.g. HACCP or SFBB pack):

- Suppliers List for sous vide products including food and packaging;
- Documented safe methods for each product and information on how methods have been validated to show the product is safe (including time, temperature, water bath loading, monitoring techniques and sizes for all products);
- Calibration records for the probe and water bath (externally verified as an annual requirement);
- Temperature records of the water, core time/temperatures of foods, cooling records, storage time/temperatures and reheating time/temperatures;
- Evidence of staff training on the sous vide process.

We are currently working on producing a guidance document on sous vide for our local businesses but in the meantime have a look at Allerdale Borough Council's Sous Vide safety leaflet

<http://www.allerdale.gov.uk/environment-and-waste/environmental-health/food-safety/food-hygiene-information-leaflet.aspx>.

Food businesses seeking advice on this issue can contact the Food Safety team on 01803 208025 or via our website <https://forms.torbay.gov.uk/ContactFood>.



Asbestos...

If existing asbestos containing materials are in good condition and are not likely to be damaged, they may be left in place; their condition monitored and managed to ensure they are not disturbed.

If you're responsible for maintenance of non-domestic premises such as a hotel, cafe or bar, you have a duty to manage the asbestos in them,

to protect anyone using or working in the premises from the risks to health that exposure to asbestos causes.

If you want to do any building or maintenance work in premises, or on plant or equipment that might contain asbestos, you need to identify where it is and its type and condition; assess the risks, and manage and control these risks. For further information visit www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos



Mobile Catering

Last summer the team attended several outdoor events across the bay inspecting mobile food caterers. Mobile caterers include any food business that uses a vehicle for preparation and for serving food. These also include temporary premises such as stalls or trailers. Mobile food vendors can include burger vans, ice cream vans, mobile fishmongers and butchers and market stalls at street events. People running mobile or temporary food businesses must be registered with the Local Authority where the vehicle/business is kept overnight and they also need to be aware of the same food hygiene issues as other businesses.

Out of the 17 mobile caterers that were inspected and rated, 14 of these were rated as a 4 or 5 under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, which is great news! This is particularly important for those businesses wanting to attend Torbay Council Supported Events (events where the organiser is Torbay Council or where the event is held on land under the control of Torbay Council) as it is policy for all traders to have a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme rating of 3 or more.

The team will continue to inspect and rate mobile caterers over the summer including those businesses who did not attend Torbay outdoor events last year along with new registered businesses.



The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme – where are we?

Torbay is doing really well on the National Food Hygiene Rating scheme so a big well done to those businesses who have worked really hard to achieve compliance and especially to those who have gained rating of either 4 or 5. In Torbay we have rated 989 premises so far and of these 92% are compliant with food safety requirements which is great news. However, there are 8% of premises who are below a rating of 3 on the scheme, in order to create a level playing field for businesses and to ensure we are focusing on those premises that are highest risk the Food Safety Team carried out a piece of work last year focusing on the low rated businesses with the aim of them achieving a better rating. Of the 75 non compliant businesses that we focused on, only 18% remained non compliant and the department is looking at further action with these premises in due course.

In 2015/16 the Food Safety Team will continue to focus its resources on those businesses who have a low food hygiene rating. If you are one of those business you do have the opportunity to apply for a re-scoring visit to try and improve your food hygiene rating. This can be done by completing the rescoring request form and sending it back to us (only one application for re-scoring can be done per full inspection). For more information on rescoring please see our website www.torbay.gov.uk/index/yourbusiness/foodsafety/fhrs/rescorevisit. The rescoring form can also be found at this web address.



Your current food hygiene score is of public information and can be found on The National Food Hygiene website. We have clear evidence to suggest that the people of Torbay and visitors to the Bay are using this site before deciding where to eat, so it is important to improve your rating on this website for your customers as well as to make your business more competitive. Ratings can be found at www.food.gov.uk/ratings

We are here to help you. If you wish to discuss your premises in more detail or require advice on how to comply then please feel free to contact me on 01803 208025 or email helen.perkins@torbay.gov.uk



Rare burgers – a recipe for food poisoning

There has been a trend among some eateries to offer rare or medium burgers on their menu, but this could lead to food poisoning.

It is safe to eat rare steak because most food poisoning bacteria associated with this product will be on the outside and therefore would be significantly reduced when it is seared and sealed. However, this does not apply to minced products like burgers, because any bacteria that may have been present on the surface of the raw meat will be spread throughout the burger when the meat is minced. Any pink meat inside the burger may still contain harmful bacteria such as E.coli.

Even just small numbers of this bacterium can cause food poisoning and other serious symptoms such as kidney failure.

This issue has been raised nationally by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which advises that burgers made from any type of meat should always be cooked until there are no pink bits and the juices run clear. Cooking in this way kills any potential bacteria which may be present. This applies whether buying a ready-made burger, making burgers with bought-in mince or mincing steak yourself on the premises. This is in line with the FSA E.coli 0157 guidance, which

was revised in December 2014

<http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide>.

Food businesses that have a poor understanding of the potential hazards and/or do not have appropriate, validated food safety management procedures, will find that this negatively affects their food hygiene rating and enforcement action may be considered. Food businesses seeking advice on this issue can contact the Food Safety team on 01803 208025 or via our website

<https://forms.torbay.gov.uk/ContactFood>.

This document can be made available in other formats.
For further information please contact 01803 208025.