



Environmental Health

Community Outreach Newsletter

All articles appearing in this newsletter were printed in previous editions

Cooling Food Safely

One of the leading causes of food borne illness outbreaks is improper cooling practices in restaurants. It is one of the most often overlooked aspects of food safety. So, here is the low-down on how to cool foods safely. But first let me explain why rapid cooling of cooked foods is so important.

As hot food cools, it passes through a range of temperatures that can support the growth of bacteria that may cause food poisoning. We

call this range of temperatures the Temperature Danger Zone (TDZ) and it ranges from 135 degrees F to 41 degrees F. How quickly the food passes through this TDZ determines whether or not the food is safe to eat. Too much time lingering around the TDZ, and dangerously high levels of bacteria or bacterial toxins can be produced in the food. As a general rule, potentially hazardous foods (like poultry, fish, meat, dairy products) should not be in the TDZ beyond four hours.

How long it takes to cool a hot food product depends on many factors, including how large a portion you are trying to cool, what kind of container it is in, and the type of food being cooled. Thick foods like mashed potatoes, refried beans, and large roasts take longer to cool than more liquid foods like water-based soups. Large containers like 5-gallon stock pots or 6-inch deep pans slow cooling times. And lids or plastic containers don't allow

(Continued on page 3)

Fall 06

September-December 06

Issued 3X per year

Our Mission:

The Mission of Environmental Health is to promote and protect the health and safety of all persons in the City of Berkeley through education and enforcement.

Inside this issue:

Online restaurant inspection results	2
FOG. Fats, oils and grease	2
Effective hand washing	4

Rats In Downtown

A community approach

Perhaps you have strolled the sidewalks in downtown Berkeley and noticed something small and furry dart quickly across your path, then disappear into a planter box. Maybe you've seen a similar creature jump out of a trash dumpster in the alley. Most metropolitan areas struggle to keep rat and mice populations at bay, where an abundance of food and shelter supports their exis-

tence. Rats and mice are commensal rodents by nature, meaning they have a relationship with people who provide their food source, and they must live among us to sustain themselves.

Well, you may not choose to have a relationship with rodents, but they rely on us to survive. And therein lies the power to control them! We have the ability to limit

the three key elements they require to survive: **food, water, and shelter.** Without these three things, the rodent population can be held in check. It may be virtually impossible to completely eradicate rodents who are so adept at living among us, but if we don't try, their numbers may increase to levels that could severely threaten the public health.

(Continued on page 3)

Online Restaurant Inspection Results

The City of Berkeley Division of Environmental Health has on its website the latest inspection results for all restaurants in Berkeley. The website will provide information on how each restaurant did on five major risk factors. We call these factors "the big five".

The "big five" is what the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified as major risk factors that may contribute to investigated or confirmed food borne illness outbreaks. One goal of a health inspector during a health inspection is to address these five risk factors that can lead to food borne illness. Our website contains the name and address of the restaurant, the last inspection date, and will show the type of violation,

major or minor that was noted by the health inspector in the five CDC risk categories, if any.

Yes, restaurant patrons are now able to see whether or not their favorite eatery did their part in protecting their customers from the five major risk factors most associated with food borne illness. Our online inspection result website can be accessed at www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/environmentalhealth. For further information you may speak with a district health inspector at (510)981-5310.



FOG and Your Restaurant

Fats, oils, and grease

What is FOG?

FOG refers to **Fats, Oils, and Grease** from food preparation, food service, and kitchen clean up. It is generated in most types of restaurant and food service establishment kitchens.

Why is FOG a problem?

When poured down the drain, FOG can build up in pipes, pumps, and equipment, causing significant problems in the community sewer system and the wastewater treatment plant. Problems include sewer line blockages that can lead to sewer overflows and spills that cause environmental and health hazards.

Why should I care about FOG?

Restaurants and food service establishments contribute greatly to the build up of FOG in the sewer lines because of the amount of grease produced during cooking, food preparation, and kitchen

cleanup. If your establishment is found to cause sanitary sewer overflows because you have not controlled grease discharge, you may be responsible for property damage and cleanup.

What are some proper FOG handling and storage methods?

- Do not pour cooking oil or grease into sinks or floor drains, or into a parking lot, storm drain or street.
- Dispose or recycle cooking oil and grease through a licensed waste grease hauler or licensed grease recycler. You can find grease haulers and recyclers under "tallow" in the yellow pages.
- Service oil and grease interceptors at least monthly. For oil and grease interceptors to function properly no more than 1/3 of the depth of the interceptor should be a floating grease layer and no more

than 1/4 of the depth should be sediment on the bottom of the interceptor.

- Under-sink grease traps should be serviced at least weekly, more often if the grease trap is more than 50% full.
- Practice dry clean up. Use scrapers to remove food wastes from serving ware, pots, pans, grills, and cooking surfaces prior to cleaning them with water.
- Use food grade paper to soak up oil and grease under fryer baskets.

Recently, the East Bay Municipal Utility District began requiring grease interceptor permits in some food establishments. For additional information on grease interceptors and permit requirements please call the **Environmental Services Division of the East Bay Municipal Utility District at (510)287-1727**.

Cooling Food

(Continued from page 1)
heat to readily escape food.

Ok so how should hot food be cooled then? Try these methods:

- Reduce portion size: transfer from large containers into smaller ones or shallow pans. Keep food depth under 2 inches.
- Use an ice-water bath: place hot container into a sink with ice and cold water surrounding it. Stir the

food to allow heat to escape.

- Use an ice paddle: These are special plastic bottles that have been filled with water and frozen. The paddle is inserted directly into the hot food and can also be used to stir it.
- Try a combination of these methods!

Once the food reaches about room temperature, it is safe to put into a cooler. Avoid putting hot food directly into a cooler because it will heat up other cold foods

around it. There are specially designed coolers called blast chillers that are used just to cool food, but they are expensive.

The goal of any cooling process should be to get the food to cool from 135 degrees F to 41 degrees F within four hours. Keep a time and temperature log during the cooling process to document how fast it all happens. Use a sanitized and calibrated probe thermometer to measure food temperature.

Rats in Downtown

A community approach

(Continued from page 1)

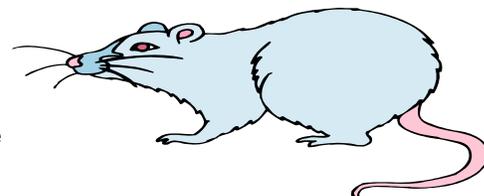
Rats and mice are vectors of disease— they carry harmful organisms that can infect human populations and cause illness. The historical bubonic plague outbreak was a worst-case scenario that is unlikely to repeat in these modern times. However, the threat of leptospirosis and salmonellosis from contaminated food supplies, and other diseases from rodent parasites such as mites and fleas, are with us today.

Pesticides alone cannot control rodent populations in a dense city environment. It requires a community effort to eliminate the three key survival elements. Here is the plan of attack:

- **Eliminate food sources.** This is achieved through good sanitation practices. Rodents in the downtown area feast on food scraps found on the ground, in planter areas, and in poorly maintained trash dumpsters. They also find their way into buildings where food is stored, such as restaurants and markets. To effectively eliminate these food sources, everyone must pitch in to help maintain good sanitation. Those businesses responsible for trash dumpsters must monitor the

trash area and keep it clean— no food or trash bags left on the ground, all trash placed in sealed bags, and the lids kept closed on the dumpsters. Food establishments must be kept clean. The general public must use trashcans to dispose of litter instead of dropping trash on the ground. Public areas must be routinely cleaned.

- **Eliminate water.** This is a challenge because water sources are plentiful, and they often cannot be effectively controlled. What can be controlled are pipes that leak, and other sources of standing water that can be dumped. Standing water is also a problem for West Nile Virus control (which is spread by mosquitoes that breed in stagnant water).
- **Eliminate shelter.** Rats and mice in the downtown area live in many different types of places. Rats may burrow into the ground, especially in planter areas where dirt allows easy digging, and a concrete roof provides extra protection. They can even burrow into damaged sections of asphalt and concrete. Thinning out vegetation makes planter areas less inviting, but rodents are opportunistic and persistent, finding alternative locations to burrow. Asphalt and concrete burrows can be filled in and smoothed out. They may also live in the narrow gaps between buildings. These gaps exist for seismic considerations, but sometimes a sheet of metal flashing will discour-



age rodent harborage. Poorly maintained buildings may allow rodents entry inside structures. Damaged foundation vent screens, gaps around pipes and under doors are likely access points. Building owners should inspect their properties and make rodent-proofing repairs to keep rodents out.

Pest control through the use of pesticides can be a risky proposition, and it is usually never enough in and of itself to control rats and mice. Pesticides should only be used by licensed professionals who know the risks of exposure to pets and children, and can safely place poison in areas only accessible to rodents. Poisoning efforts can be undermined if the three elements of rodent survival are not also controlled at the same time.

You can begin to see the “community” aspect of rodent control coming into focus now. Property owners, business owners, city services, and the general public all have a responsibility in this. So whoever you are, pitch in and help us maintain public health.

Hand Washing

An effective way to prevent the spread of illness

Many factors may cause food borne illness, from improper food holding temperatures to contaminated food to raw or undercooked foods. But one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent food borne illness and the spread of infection is proper hand washing.

Hand washing is not only effective in preventing the spread of food borne illness, but also effective against the spread of other communicable diseases such as the common cold and the flu.

80% of infectious diseases are spread by hand contact, not through the air by coughs and sneeze as commonly believed. More than two million Americans contract an infection during hospital stays. Of that group, an estimated 90,000 die every year from these infections. Up to 20,000 of these deaths

could be prevented by practicing simple hand hygiene procedures, such as those outline in the new office of Communicable Disease Control hand hygiene guideline.

81% of adult Americans agree that washing hands can help keep them from getting sick— but an observational study of public restrooms showed only 67% actually wash their hands after using the restroom.

Ok, enough mind numbing statistics. Here is what you can do.

When should you wash your hands?

- When arriving at work.
- After using the bathroom.
- After smoking.
- After sneezing.

- After touching your hair, face or clothing.
- After eating or drinking.
- After taking off or before putting on a new pair of gloves.
- Before handling ready to eat foods like salads and sandwiches.
- After handling garbage.

How should you wash your hands?

- Use warm water and dispenser soap. Bar soap may spread germs.
- Wash for at least 20 seconds.
- Use single use paper towels to dry. No rags or cloth towels.
- Use a paper towel to turn off the water tap and when opening and closing the bathroom door.
- Scrub under nails.

(Source: CA Dept. of Health Services)



Publisher/Editor: Jay Ogden REHS

City of Berkeley
Health & Human Services Dept.
Environmental Health Division
1947 Center Street, 3rd floor
Berkeley CA 94704

510.981.5310 main
510.981.5305 fax
510.981.6903 TDD
Email: envhealth@ci.berkeley.ca.us

Protecting public health.

