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6-1-2010

Preventing Contamination of Food

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University

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Recommended Citation

Extension Service, Cooperative, "Preventing Contamination of Food" (2010). *SDSU Extension Special Series*. Paper 35.
http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/extension_ss/35

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PREVENTING CONTAMINATION OF FOOD

MONDAY CHAOS

On Monday, the kitchen was a little short on help. The assistant cook came to work with the stomach flu and was sent home by the manager. They were falling behind on prepping food. Super Sam, one of the wait staff, decided to help back in the kitchen and ran back to the cooler to get some more raw ground-beef patties, pickles, and cheese. The patties were on the top shelf. When placing the patties on a tray to carry out of the cooler, some of the juice dripped onto the shelf below and onto some prepared relish trays. Since he still had his wiping cloth in his hand from cleaning the service counter, he quickly cleaned up the spilled juice. When Sam finally returned to the front of the restaurant, several tables had emptied and he helped remove the dirty dishes. He finished the job by cleaning the table with the wiping cloth that was still in his hand. They were finally getting caught up.

Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other food.

PREVENT CROSS-CONTAMINATION:

- Always wash hands before and after handling food.
- After cutting raw meats, wash hands, cutting board, knife, and counter tops with hot, soapy water.
- Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the cooler.
- Avoid bare hand contact with foods that are ready-to-eat*. Use utensils, deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment.
- Use a utensil (spoon or fork) only once to taste food that is to be sold or served.
- Never store food or packages directly on the floor.
- Keep wiping cloth for food contact surfaces and tabletops in sanitizer bucket when it is not being used for wiping.
- Cloths used for wiping up raw animal juices must be kept separate from cloths used for other purposes.

* Ready-to-eat foods are foods that require no further preparation or cooking before serving (e.g., relish trays and birthday cakes).

DIGGING DEEPER—PREVENTING CONTAMINATION OF FOOD

Refer to the scenario "Monday Chaos" for questions 1 through 4:

- 1) When Sam entered the kitchen to help, what precautions should he take to avoid contamination of food?
 - a) Put on an apron.
 - b) Wash his hands.
 - c) Put the wiping cloth in the sanitizing bucket.
 - d) All of the above.
- 2) What should be done with the relish tray?
 - a) Cook the items, so any bacteria that would have gotten on them would be destroyed.
 - b) Throw the items away.
 - c) Wash the items thoroughly under running water.
 - d) Wash the items with a very weak solution of chlorine bleach.
- 3) Where should the raw ground-beef patties be stored in the cooler?
 - a) next to the relish tray
 - b) on the floor, so they cannot drip on anything
 - c) on the bottom shelf (above poultry)
 - d) close to the door for easy access
- 4) Which of the following is NOT an example of cross-contamination?
 - a) Refilling your beverage container after placing a chicken breast on the grill while wearing gloves.
 - b) Cracking eggs in a large bowl for an egg bake, then immediately removing hot rolls from the oven.
 - c) Sweeping the floor, then assisting another employee in putting an order together with French fries, pops, and cheeseburgers.
 - d) Using tongs to place donuts on a serving tray.

Source: South Dakota Food Service Code 44:02:07:28(1).

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