



A word from your EHO ...

Winter is a great time for hearty meals, but there are some important food safety processes to keep in mind when preparing large volume meals or any cook chill meals (which are outlined below). Additionally, this newsletter includes background information in relation to a recent outbreak of Salmonella Enteritidis, a reminder about food recalls and details of Council's next food hygiene seminar.

As always, if you have any questions regarding food safety or any environmental health matter, please contact us to discuss. We have a centralised email address for all correspondence, so feel free to send any questions or feedback to council@midcoast.nsw.gov.au.

Kind regards

Ryan Fenning - Team Leader Environmental Health, Food & General

STAY HOT THIS WINTER

Winter is the perfect time for comfort meals including soups and stews. However, some important food safety matters to keep in mind when working with meals produced in large volumes includes:

- **Keep it hot** - when cooking of the product has finished, ensure that the product is held at or above 60°C;
- **Cool correctly** - potentially hazardous food must be cooled from 60°C to 21°C (or below) within two hours and from 21°C to 5°C (or below) within a further four hours (known as the 2+4 hour rule);
- **Keep it cold** - potentially hazardous food must be stored under temperature control 5°C or below;
- **Reheat rapidly** - ensure that any product intended for hot holding that has been through a cook/chill process is reheated rapidly to an internal temperature of 60°C or above. Equipment designed only for hot holding, such as bain maries and pie warmers must not be used for reheating food as these items of equipment are designed to hold heated food hot, but are not designed to 'rapidly' reheat food.
- **Do not reheat more than once** - it is best practice that potentially hazardous food that has already been reheated not be cooled and reheated a second time.



IMPORTANT TIP!

A readily accessible and accurate (to +/- 1°C) food probe thermometer is a must within any premises where potentially hazardous food is handled. A food probe thermometer not only ensures that potentially hazardous food is being stored under temperature control, but can also be used to demonstrate that cooling and reheating practices are safe and meeting Food Standards Code requirements.



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FREE FOOD HYGIENE SEMINAR

Everyone likes a freebie, so why not join our free food safety seminar in Taree.

We've received some excellent feedback from participants in the past, who gained practical advice on how best to meet safety legislation in their retail food businesses.

The aim of our free seminar is to inform food businesses and food handlers of their responsibilities in preparing and handling safe food for sale.

You'll also walk away with tips and suggestions on how your business can improve its food safety outcomes.

When:
2pm - 5pm, Tuesday 12 November 2019

Where:
Taree Visitor Information Centre, 21 Manning River Drive

RSVP:
Bookings are essential, by phoning us on 6591 7222. Light refreshments will be provided.

This is a great opportunity for MidCoast retail food businesses, so please register today.

EGG SAFETY INSIDE AND OUT

While egg shells are widely recognised as a source of contamination and stringent procedures have been implemented for inspecting and tracking eggs, less well known may be transmission of Salmonella Enteritidis, which can infect the ovaries of hens and contaminate eggs before the shells are formed.

A joint investigation by NSW Health and the NSW Food Authority has been ongoing following at least 184 NSW residents becoming unwell due to an outbreak of Salmonella Enteritidis since first reported in May 2018.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (2018) advise that 'possible sources of infection in commercial layer flocks include transmission from breeders, contaminated environments, infected vermin (including rodents) and contaminated feed' and that bacterial transfer from 'breeders is mainly through eggshell contamination, although transmission through the egg may also occur'.

Symptoms of salmonellosis according to Food Standards Australia & New Zealand (2019) 'are usually limited to mild gastroenteritis but may include fever, headache, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. Patients usually recover within a week. But the illness can lead to systemic illness and other longer-term conditions.'

To prevent illness:

- Keep eggs in the fridge
- Keep eggs in their carton to minimise damage
- Always use clean eggs, free from dirt and cracks
- Keep hands, surfaces and utensils clean, dry (and sanitised where appropriate) before and after handling eggs
- Use eggs within the date printed on the carton
- Cook eggs thoroughly

Further information in relation to Salmonella Enteritidis (including affected products and recall notices) can be found at:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/Salmonella-Enteritidis-linked-to-eggs.aspx>

REMINDER TO CHECK FOOD RECALLS

Food businesses have an obligation to ensure that only safe and suitable food is provided to customers, which includes checking to see if products you have in stock have been recalled. It is the responsibility of all food retailers to remove all recalled product from sale. Food Standards Australia New Zealand coordinates and monitors food recalls in Australia and report that there has been an average of 67 recalls per year over the last 10 years.

Products may be withdrawn from sale for two reasons:

- the product has a quality defect (eg colour or texture), is underweight, or has labelling irregularities but does not pose a potential risk to public health and safety; or
- as a precaution, stock may be withdrawn from distribution and/or sale pending further investigation - if a risk to public health and safety is established, the product must be recalled.

If you have concerns regarding the safety of food purchased, you must:

- separate the product from other stock and clearly identify it as not for use; and
- contact the distributor and in serious cases contact Council or the NSW Food Authority.

In the instance that the product is to be returned, most products can usually be returned for a full refund.

Details of recent food recalls in NSW can be found on the NSW Food Authority website at <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/recalls> and Food Standards Australia New Zealand website at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/recalls/Pages/default.aspx>

If there is anything you'd like to see featured in the next food safety newsletter, contact an Environmental Health Officer to discuss your ideas.

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