Bon Appétit

The Quarterly Food Safety Newsletter of the Alexandria Health Department

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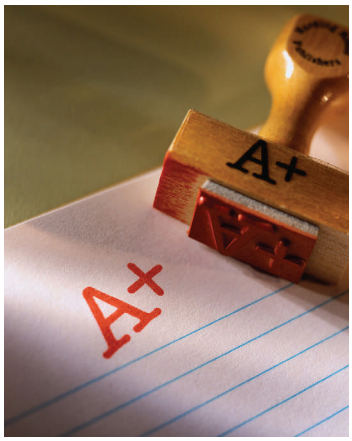
Public Meeting

The Division of Environmental Health will hold a public meeting on April 6th, 2010, to hear comments and answer questions about the proposed adoption of the 2009 FDA Model Food Code to replace the 2005 FDA Model Food Code. The meeting will take place from 2:00PM—4:00PM at The Lyceum, which is located at 201 South Washington Street.

The 2009 Model FDA Food Code includes changes to the definition section, additional methods of compliance for facilities wishing to perform reduced oxygen packaging, and a new requirement for cut leafy greens. The Division of Environmental Health has also proposed changes to the definition of a limited food establishment and the section addressing demonstration of knowledge. Your participation at this public meeting is encouraged!

A copy of the 2009 FDA Model Food Code can be found at the Division of Environmental Health's website.

Knowledge Assessment Study Guide—Cooling



Properly cooling potentially hazardous food is an important part of any food safety program. The goal of properly cooling food is to minimize time spent in the temperature danger zone. By minimizing the amount of time that a food spends in the temperature danger zone (41°F - 135°F), an operator can reduce the chance that bacterial growth will make a customer sick.

When the Environmental Health Specialist (EHS) conducts an inspection of your restaurant, he/she will review your menu and identify foods that may require cooling, such as soups, pastas, sliced tomatoes, and sliced melon. The EHS will then ask you about the methods you use to cool these menu items, and the time/temperature relationships necessary to comply with the Food Code. Examples are provided on the next page.

Question: You just finished making 20 chicken breasts, and you want to cool them down so you can use them tomorrow. How many hours do you have to cool the chicken breasts down?
Answer: We use a thermometer to determine when the chicken reaches 135°F. Once it has reached 135°F, we have 2 hours or less to cool the chicken to 70°F, and 6 hours or less to cool the chicken from 135°F to 41°F. Sometimes we can cool the chicken from 135°F to 70°F in 30 minutes. If that happens, we have 5.5 hours to complete the cooling process to 41°F.

Question: What is the process you use to cool your pasta?
Answer: After we finish cooking the pasta, we place it into a large container with ice and water. If all of the ice melts, we add more ice. We use our thermometer to take a temperature after 10 minutes. If the pasta has reached 41°F or less, we place it in our cooler. If the pasta has not reached 41°F, we add more ice and wait another 10 minutes. Once the pasta reaches 41°F, we place it in the cooler.

Question: Your facility makes clam chowder twice a week. When you make a large batch of clam chowder, what method do you use to cool it to 41°F?
Answer: We cook our clam chowder in the morning. When we are finished cooking, we place the clam chowder in 2" metal hotel pans and place the pans on the prep table. We check the clam chowder every 30 minutes with our thermometer to see if it has reached 135°F. Once the clam chowder reaches 135°F, we place the hotel pans on the top shelf of our freezer without a cover. Each hour, the cook goes into the freezer, stirs the clam chowder, and takes a temperature with his thermometer. It takes about 1 hour for the clam chowder to reach 70° F, and another 2 hours to reach 41°F. Once all of the clam chowder reaches 41°F, we move it to the walk-in cooler.

Question: Your facility just made a large container of stew. At 11:00AM, the stew reached 135°F. It is now 12:30PM, the stew is 115°F, and it does not look like it will reach 70°F by 1:00PM. What type of corrective action can you take?
Answer: The Certified Food Manager can rapidly reheat the stew on the gas range. The stew must reach 165°F for 15 seconds. After the stew is reheated, we will try and cool the stew again.

Question: Your facility stores tomatoes/honey dew/cantaloupe/water melon at room temperature. Once these items are cut, how many hours do you have to cool them down?
Answer: Room temperature is about 70°F, so we have 4 hours to cool these items down to 41°F once they are cut.

Question: Your facility stores cans of tuna fish at room temperature. Once these cans are opened, how many hours do you have to cool the tuna fish down?
Answer: Room temperature is about 70°F, so we have 4 hours to cool the tuna fish down to 41°F once the cans are opened.

Question: Your facility stores tomatoes/honey dew/cantaloupe/water melon at room temperature. Once these items are cut, how will you cool them down?
Answer: The cut tomatoes/honey dew/cantaloupe/water melon are placed in a shallow metal container or tray, loosely covered with plastic, and placed into the cooler. After two hours, the Certified Food Manager uses a thermometer to check the temperature and make sure the tomatoes are rapidly cooling down.