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Guidelines for Safe Consumption of Raw and Undercooked Fish

www.alexandriava.gov/FoodSafety

Raw and/or undercooked fish may be desired by consumers for taste or perceived nutritional reasons. Some species of fish contain parasites. Parasites consumed in raw or undercooked, unfrozen fish can present a human health hazard. Some products that have been implicated in human infection are ceviche, sashimi, sushi, cold-smoked fish and undercooked grilled fish. The following parasite destruction guidelines have been provided to ensure that food service establishments are serving raw and/or undercooked fish safely.

- To ensure destruction of parasites, fish may be frozen before service as an alternative public health control to that which is provided by adequate cooking.
- Thoroughly freezing fish kills parasites if the fish are subjected to a low enough temperature for a specific amount of time.
- Raw or undercooked fish may be offered for sale or service if the fish is:
 1. Frozen on the premises; or
 2. Obtained from a supplier that freezes the fish.
- The following freezing time and temperature requirements are necessary to destroy parasites:
 1. Frozen and stored at a temperature of -4°F or below for a minimum of 168 hours (7 days) in a freezer;
 2. Frozen at -31°F or below until solid and stored at -31°F or below for a minimum of 15 hours; or
 3. Frozen at -31°F or below until solid and stored at -4°F or below for a minimum of 24 hours.
- If raw or undercooked fish are frozen on premises the person in charge shall:
 1. Record the freezing temperature and time to which the fish are subjected; and
 2. Retain the freezing records for 90 calendar days beyond the time of service or sale of the fish.
- If raw or undercooked fish are obtained from a supplier a written agreement or statement from the supplier shall be obtained and retained in the records of the food establishment for 90 calendar days beyond the time of service or sale of the fish. The written agreement or statement shall contain the following information:
 1. Name and address of the establishment;
 2. Name and address of supplier;
 3. All species of fish that are frozen for parasite destruction and provided to the establishment;
 4. Exact temperature to which the fish are frozen;
 5. Exact time to which the fish are frozen at the temperature specified in (4) above;
 6. Contact name and phone number for person in charge of parasite destruction operations; and
 7. Signature of contact person listed in (6) above.

The operator shall note that all parasite destruction letters will be verified against invoices.

- If aquacultured fish are served raw or undercooked a written agreement or statement from the supplier or aquaculturist shall be obtained and retained in the records of the food establishment for 90 calendar days beyond the time of service or sale of the fish. The agreement shall stipulate that the fish:

1. If raised in open water, are raised in net-pens, or
2. Are raised in land-based operations such as ponds or tanks; and
3. Are fed formulated feed, such as pellets, that contains no live parasites infective to the aquacultured fish.

A consumer advisory statement disclosing which products contain raw or undercooked fish and reminding consumers that consuming raw or undercooked foods may increase their risk of foodborne illness must be provided on the menu.