

## FOOD FOCUS

JULY 1, 2004

### Reminders

- ! Spanish class is now on Friday mornings. Participants should arrive by 8:00 a.m. for processing with \$10 (cash).
- ! Food Handler waiver tests are available in place of re-attending a class. Experienced food workers must pre-register by calling 595-4335.
- ! Temporary food handler permits are \$10 (cash). You may receive only 1 temporary; after which you must attend the class. A temporary card is only valid until the expiration date on the card.
- ! Unofficial copies of Managers Certificates are not allowed and will be destroyed. Call 595-4335 for information about a duplicate.

### FOOD ALLERGENS

The Food and Drug Administration has identified eight foods that most commonly cause allergic reaction: milk, eggs, fish, wheat, tree nuts, peanuts, soybeans, and crustaceans (shrimp and crabs). Proteins in these foods are estimated to cause 90% of allergic reactions.

Only about 1.5% of adults and up to 6% of children younger than 3 years (about 4 million people) have a true food allergy. However, an estimated 150 Americans die each year from severe allergic reactions to food. Currently the only way to treat food allergies is to avoid the food that triggers reactions. Even the most diligent label-readers may be inadvertently exposed to proteins that elicit an allergic response.

Food service workers should be aware of the following common symptoms of an allergic reaction and be prepared to call for medical help if necessary.

- Swelling of the tongue and throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Hives
- Abdominal cramps and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of consciousness, and even death.



### PEST CONTROL!

It's that time again – fly season! Flies have the potential to spread disease, and it is important during the warmer months, especially, to implement methods of pest control. The following steps can help you to eliminate the presence of flies in your establishment:

- Keep doors and windows closed at all times. If this is not possible, install screens or “air-curtains”.
- Repair or replace damaged screens.
- Keep outdoor garbage containers tightly closed and clean. Empty indoor and outdoor trash receptacles frequently.
- Place outdoor garbage containers as far as possible from building entrances.

If flies happen to swarm your establishment despite your best efforts, there are several approved methods of dealing with them. Electronic traps or sticky flypaper can be used; however, they may not be installed over food preparation areas. Electronic traps must also be designed so that the captured fly stays in the trap. Body parts cannot be blasted onto food, equipment, or utensils. Clean these traps frequently. The simplest and cheapest fly control method is the good old-fashioned fly swatter. Splat ‘em, then be sure to sanitize the area.

Remember – one fly in the soup spoils the whole batch!

## CRUISE LINE ILLNESS

Do you remember the illnesses that plagued the cruise industry last summer? The majority of those illnesses were caused by Norovirus, which is found in the stool or vomit of infected people.

This is of concern to those in the food service industry because any employee ill with the virus can easily contaminate food and drinks. The virus is so small that it can travel through the air to land on food or drinks. It is estimated that as many as 1/2 of all food-related outbreaks of illness may be caused by Norovirus. In many of these cases, sick food handlers were thought to be implicated.

For this reason, employees exhibiting the following symptoms should immediately leave work: cramping, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, headache with a fever. The Tulsa Health Department recommends that food handlers with vomiting and diarrhea not work until 2 or 3 days after the symptoms have passed.

In addition, because the virus continues to be present in the stool for as long as 2 to 3 weeks, strict hand washing procedures must be followed after using the restroom and before handling food. Different duties may be assigned during this time that do not involve food contact (cash register, trash removal, bussing tables).

## Introducing...



DeBrena Hilton  
Food Handler  
Program Coordinator

*And*



Sara Rodriguez  
Food Handler  
Office Clerk

**DeBrena Hilton** has been promoted to the Food Handler Program Coordinator. She has worked as a food establishment inspector for the past 7 years and has taught food handler classes since 1999. Among her new duties, she will oversee instructors and class content as well as teach.

**Sara Rodriguez** is a bi-lingual clerk and has been with the Health Department since January 2004. Sara speaks Spanish fluently and teaches the Spanish food handler class on occasion. Sara also assists inspectors in field conferences where interpreting services are needed.

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