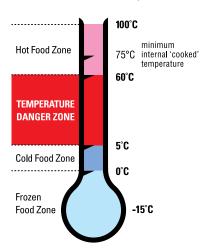# Food Safety

How important is food safety to you?

Did you know that, according to the Food Safety Information Council, there are an estimated 5,400,000 cases of food poisoning in Australia each year? On average these cases of food poisoning result in 120 deaths, 1.2 million visits to doctors, 300,000 prescriptions for antibiotics and 2.1 million days of lost work each year.

The Council estimates that the annual cost of food poisoning in Australia is $1.25 billion. Sadly, many of these food poisoning cases could easily have been avoided if simple preventative measures had been taken.

Most people in the food industry are aware of the temperature danger zone. For those who haven't heard of it, the temperature danger zone is between 5°C and 60°C. If bacteria are present in high-risk foods (such as meat, fish, chicken, dairy, cooked rice and cooked pasta) and they are left in this danger zone, then the bacteria will start to grow very quickly. In fact, in ideal conditions, the bacteria will double every 20 minutes.

> Regular temperature checks are one of the simplest ways to prevent potential food poisoning outbreaks.

As I said, most people in the food industry have heard this before, but it amazes me how many people don't do regular checks on their hot and cold food storage units to check if their products are above or below the required limits.

If you have hot food on display, you should check the temperature of the products that you have on display. Go out *now* and see if the pies, fish, curries and rice are being stored or displayed above 60°C and make sure you stick your sanitised thermometer into the food – don't rely on the gauge.

How did you go? How many items were above and how many were below 60°C? Do the same exercise with your cold food items. If you have a sandwich bar, cake cabinet or salad buffet, check the temperature of the food and see if they are all below 5°C. Regular temperature checks are one of the simplest ways to prevent potential food poisoning outbreaks. Some of my clients leave their thermometers in their displays permanently so that they can always see the temperature. Other simple things you can do include regularly servicing your coolrooms and putting alarms on your gauges. Whatever you do, you need to make sure that your high risk food items are stored below 5°C or above 60°C.

Until next edition,
Eat well. Eat safe!

Gavin Buckett
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References:
Food Safety Information Council:
http://www.foodsafety.asn.au

100°C

Hot Food Zone

75°C   minimum internal 'cooked' temperature

60°C

TEMPERATURE DANGER ZONE

5°C

Cold Food Zone

0°C

Frozen Food Zone   -15°C