

CAN YOU HEAR THE BUGS SINGING:



Author Gavin Buckettt

“Summer’s here and the time is right... for dancing in the street?”

Finally the sun is shining and it has started to get warmer. Can you tell I am based in Melbourne? In what has felt like the coldest, longest winter of all time, the last of the cold feet days should be behind us for at least a couple of months. And while we are currently celebrating spring (including the sun, lamb, asparagus, mangoes etc.) the little bugs that make all of us sick if not controlled are also celebrating as their conditions for growth have just improved significantly.

You see, food poisoning bacteria thrives if the following conditions are present:

- It is the right temperature (think *danger zone*).
- If moisture is present.
- There is a food source or nutrient for them to eat.
- They are given time to multiply.
- There is not too much acid present.

Plus most bacteria also need oxygen for them to grow (but not all of them).

Coming into the warmer months you need to really focus on the following food safety fundamentals:

- How long do *potentially hazardous foods* (PHF) spend in the danger zone? In previous articles we have discussed the 2 hour/4 hour rule. Over summer, you need to focus on the time these foods spend out of temperature control:
 - Buffets.
 - Outdoor BBQ and other picnic type events.
 - Food preparation (i.e. sandwiches, canapés etc.)
 - Deliveries to customers.
 - Acceptance of food deliveries (i.e. PHF being packed away as quickly as possible).
 - Mise en place for à la carte service (i.e. salad dressings, garnishes, salad bars etc.) that are not refrigerated during service.
- Most summer meals are not cooked as long as winter meals, so personal and premises hygiene is important as the so

called *kill step* is much shorter.

- We eat a lot more salads and other raw items. Make sure you double wash all your fruits and vegetables and if you are using a chemical sanitiser make sure you follow the directions for exposure time and dilution rates.
- During hotter months it takes PHF much longer to cool down after cooking as the room temperature is higher and the cool rooms are working harder – it would be safer to try and fresh cook rather than cook chill.
- If defrosting seafood or poultry in the coolroom, be conscious of cross contamination from dripping condensation and product juices.
- Make sure your suppliers are using refrigerated vehicles (that are operating) and if it is meat, poultry or seafood that the vehicle is registered with the appropriate state regulator (NSWFA, Prime Safe, SafeFood Queensland etc.)

I love summer with the light food styles (lots of fresh fruits and herbs), eating outdoors, the evenings where it is still light (unless you are saving your curtains in Queensland or WA), the smell of BBQ meat wafting through the streets, and I would never want any of it to stop. The purpose of this article is to make you aware of the risks, so you can continue to enjoy all of these characteristics of summer. Have fun, but eat safe, and make sure your customers do as well.

Eat well. Eat safe!

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