To: Food Businesses

Title: Egg Safety

This information is provided to advise food businesses about the safe purchasing, storing and handling of eggs and preparation of egg based products and to raise awareness about the potential risks associated with the poor handling of these products.

Many food poisoning outbreaks have been associated with foods containing raw or partially cooked eggs such as aioli, mayonnaise, hollandaise & tartare sauce, custard, cheesecake and mousse that are made by the food business.

The external shell of eggs may contain harmful bacteria such as Salmonella. Salmonella is a bacteria that can be found in the intestines of birds and other animals. While eggs may not necessarily look or smell “off” they may be contaminated.

Cracked and dirty eggs pose a higher food safety risk. Eggs sold for retail and catering purposes must not be cracked or dirty because:

- Eggs that are cracked and/or dirty have a much higher chance of carrying bacteria and in turn, significantly increase the risks of food poisoning.
- If an egg shell is cracked (including fine hairline cracks), harmful bacteria can easily enter and grow inside the egg.
- Dirty eggs are a perfect environment for bacteria and as the eggshell is porous, bacteria can move through the shell and into the egg itself. These dirty eggs may also cause cross contamination within the food preparation area.

**Purchasing Eggs**

When purchasing eggs:

- Check that eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked. Any cracked or dirty eggs received should be thrown away.
- Check that the name and address of the egg producer is on the carton or packaging as well as the best before date.
- Ensure that the eggs are individually stamped with the producer’s or packer’s unique identification.

Stamping does not guarantee food safety – it is how your business handles the eggs after purchase that is important.

It is an offence for a food retailer or distributor to sell or offer for sale cracked or dirty eggs. This offence should be reported to your council’s local Environmental Health Officer or SA Health. Contact details for SA Health are located at the end of this information sheet.

**Storing Eggs**

It is important to use eggs before the recommended best before date shown on the outside of the carton or packaging.

Eggs should be stored at a temperature of 15°C or less. It is recommended that eggs are stored under refrigeration to minimise the risk of harmful bacteria growing.
When eggs are stored under refrigeration, care should be taken to prevent the transfer of potentially harmful bacteria to other foods. Keep eggs in their original packaging, and store them away from any cooked or ready to eat foods.

Handling Eggs
Always ensure you thoroughly wash your hands after handling eggs with warm water and soap and dry your hands with paper towel.

Prior to using eggs, always check if there are any cracked or dirty eggs. Do not try to clean dirty eggs by washing the eggs. The safest way to deal with dirty or cracked eggs is to throw them out.

Tips to prevent the transfer of potential harmful bacteria to preparation surfaces include:
• Throw used eggshells into the bin immediately.
• Avoid spillage of egg material onto preparation surfaces.
• Wash and sanitise preparation surfaces after handling eggs, if there has been spillage of egg material and before preparing other food.
• Any utensils or equipment used with eggs should be thoroughly washed, sanitised and dried.
• If separating eggs, it is recommended that a sanitised egg separator or gloved hands are used. Do not use bare hands or shells to separate eggs as harmful bacteria may be transferred from the eggshell into the egg material.

Preparing Egg Based Products
Generally, eggs are either cooked or added to foods that need to be cooked such as cakes, quiches and frittatas. Harmful bacteria are killed by cooking and in turn, minimises the risk of them being present in the final meal served.

There can be a high risk of harmful bacteria contamination and illness in customers if eggs are added to a food that will not be cooked or are only partially cooked – such as mayonnaise, aioli, hollandaise & tartare sauce, ice cream, protein drinks containing raw egg, cheesecake (cold-set), mousse, custard (cold-set), tiramisu and meringue – particularly if they are made in-house.

Note: Refer to Issue 27C - Preparation of Raw Egg Products for more information on tips to minimise the risk of harmful bacteria being present in the final meal served. This information sheet can be found online at: www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/food-index.htm

Where can I get more information?
More information can be obtained from the Environmental Health Officer at your local council or alternatively from SA Health.

For more information
Food Policy & Programs
SA Health
Telephone: 8226 7100
11 Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide SA 5000

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