



FoodBytes

Indiana State Department of Health

“Recipe for Success” cooked to order

Attendees seemed to agree that the recent food symposium, “Recipe for Success in Food Safety and Defense,” co-sponsored by Mid America Public Health Training Center (MAPHTC) and the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) Food Protection Program was “well done.”

According to MAPHTC figures, more than 150 people attended the three-day event to hear presentations ranging from handling meat and poultry sales, to dealing with value-added foods and farmers markets, to proper inspection techniques.

The symposium was followed by a meeting of the Food Defense Task Force comprised of federal, state, local regulators and industry

persons with presentations designed to improve Indiana’s preparedness in the event of an incident involving the food supply.



Carol Biddle, Miami Co. Health Dept. (left) and Sharon Patee, Wabash Co. Health Dept. (right) discuss a presentation at the recent Food Safety symposium.

Bill to exempt not-for-profits passes

A bill to exempt Indiana not-for-profit businesses from compliance with the food code has passed both houses of the legislature. The bill’s language was added to the end of another bill (HB-1235) and provides that all groups exempt from state retail taxes also be exempt

from food safety regulations.

This bill mostly expands the exemption status of religious institutions by removing certain provisions that required compliance. Guidance will be coming soon from the ISDH Food Protection Program.

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Symposium speakers provide wealth of valuable info

Whether it was reduced oxygen packaging or food security, attendees to the recent symposium, "Recipe for Success in Food Safety and Defense," learned about topics from "soup to nuts."

Reduced Oxygen Packaging (ROP) was discussed in depth by Dr. Lisa Mauer from Purdue University who explained the packaging methods used and the risks associated with each method.



Michelle Glunt, Retail Food Specialist, spelled out the important factors in conducting a proper plan review.

ROP includes any packaging method that reduces the oxygen to less than 21%. This includes vacuum packaging, modified atmosphere packaging, and controlled atmosphere packaging.

Dr. Mauer pointed out that ROP food creates the potential for growth and toxin production of *C. botulinum* at refrigeration temperatures without visible signs of spoilage.

"Any ROP food with a pH above 4.6 or a water activity greater than .91 can pose a risk," she said.

Dawn McDevitt with the Ft. Wayne - Allen Co. Health Department explained how her staff handles meat vendors who sell door-to-door. Dawn said her department uses a variety of methods to maintain control



Kris Moore, Regional Retail Food Specialist with FDA, discussed the latest food safety initiatives from FDA including the "Standards" program designed to measure local health departments' food inspection programs.

of mobile meat vendors. These include permitting, inspecting each unit for proper refrigeration, and to determine if the meat comes from an inspected facility, using law enforcement to track vendors resisting compliance, and providing educational materials to the public about meat sales.

Dawn says their program has been successful.

Retail food inspections are about "control"

Are food inspectors asking the right questions during retail food establishment inspections? That was one question posed by Ed Norris, Retail Food Training Specialist, during the March food safety symposium.

Ed added that inspectors must ask proper questions to find answers about food safety controls when they can't make direct obser-

vations. Good communication is very important.

"Ask specific questions about the menu," he said, "especially about any raw meats being cooked or any foods that become ingredients for other foods."

Symposium attendees were also introduced to the concept of "active managerial control" and how to determine compliance with

the code by determining proper control at each step of the food preparation process.

"The days of looking just at the facility are past," he added. "The focus must now be on the menu and the food process being used. All food inspections should begin with a menu review. Then determine which process applies and if each step is under control."

Food Venture provides guidance for processors

How often has a local health department inspector had to tell a food vendor that his “homemade” salsa or his bakery items couldn’t be sold because they were not made in an approved kitchen? The answer is quite often.

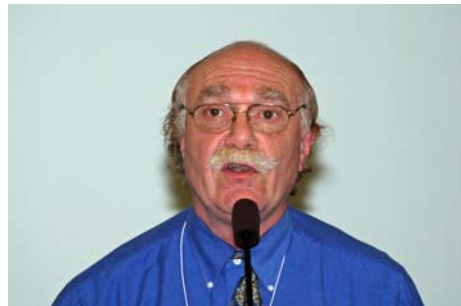
But Richard Mezoff of Madison, IN, has come up with an answer to this problem. He, along with economic development help, created the Ohio River Valley Food Venture that includes a complete food preparation facility.

Mezoff will even provide the “process authority” needed to allow entrepreneurs to produce acidified foods, like salsa.

Mezoff says he begins with a training program for clients to assure they understand the operation and maintenance of the equipment.

The facility is rented by the hour and can be utilized 24 hours a day.

More information, visit www.foodventure.org.



Richard Mezoff heads the Ohio River Valley Food Venture to provide food entrepreneurs a legal means to make and market their specialty food products.

Preparation is key to proper emergency response

Kris Thomas, Retail Food Specialist with ISDH, says it’s not a matter of “if” but “when” a local food inspector will be asked to respond to a food emergency.

“The answer,” Kris told the crowd at the recent Food Safety and Defense Symposium, “is preparation. Prepare yourself and prepare your establishments.”

She added that all law enforcement agencies within the health departments’ jurisdiction should be asked to keep health department emergency numbers handy so an inspector can be called when an emergency occurs involving a food establishment. Notifying just one law enforcement agency won’t be enough as a different agency might be the one to respond to an emergency.

Establishments must know when the law requires that they close, including after a fire, a

It’s not a matter of “if” but “when” a local health department inspector is asked to respond to a food emergency.

flood, loss of electrical or water service, or a sewage backup. Kris said it’s important that the persons in charge of any food establishment know their responsibilities to report such events to the local health department.

No matter the reason for closing, the local health department must give approval for a food establishment to reopen. Reopening will generally only come after a food safety inspection.

Kris explained that the type and extent of the emergency will determine an appropriate response. A minor event that involves only a part of a food operation might mean the remainder of the establishment can operate.

A major event means the entire facility is affected, but the structure is sound, as following a flood. The most serious event she termed “devastating,” meaning that the structure itself is compromised. A fire would be a devastating event.

After any emergency, an assessment must be done to determine if any food is salvageable and if the equipment and utensils can be cleaned and restored. Some of the damage might be hard to determine, so discarding and replacing the damaged items could be the best solution. Items like linens, door seals, and single service utensils can suffer hidden damage with a flood or fire.

Unless it’s a minor emergency, most food stored in paper or plastic would need to be discarded.

ISDH Food Protection Program offers several handouts covering food safety emergencies.

New product intended to assure proper handwashing

A Texas company has come up with an innovative way to assure that everyone washes their hands the required amount of time.

Healthmark, LLC, of Austin, TX, has come up with what the company calls “Healthy Hands,” intended to make proper hand hygiene a habit.

From the Healthmark website, the company believes that Healthy Hands will assure that a person will wash his hands by making it obvious if a person has NOT washed his hands. When the soap dispenser is used, a mark (e.g. an approved ink) is placed on a person’s hand which stays on the hand until the mark is scrubbed off with enough soap and water for a long enough period of time.

The company says the technology behind Healthy Hands is broad enough and flexible enough to be used in a variety of different products. However, after extensive market testing, Healthmark has

decided that the first products to be commercialized will be a soap dispenser using the Healthy Hands technology.



It requires 20 seconds of handwashing to remove the ink spot.

As a person uses the soap dispenser by pressing down on the pump, their hand is marked. The mark only comes off after at least 15-20 seconds of good scrubbing with the soap and warm water.

The soap dispenser products also have the additional feature of including a timing mechanism which will tell a user with an audi-

ble signal how long they should wash their hands. This audible signal can also be used as a way to encourage the use of the soap dispenser since failure to hear the signal may be obvious to both users and persons monitoring hand washing, such as restaurant management.

The technology is being marketed toward getting kids to wash their hands more often and more effectively. A product called *Squidsoap* utilizes the ink and alarm features but also places the soap in a container that is attractive to kids.

Healthmark also markets just the base which contains the audible alarm, but can be used with any suitable soap dispenser.

Did you know?

The bird flu virus, H5N1, can be controlled by proper cooking, and good personal hygiene. In other words, wash your hands, and don't cross contaminate.

Rabies virus suspected in unpasteurized milk in OK

Officials at the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) say that persons who drank unpasteurized milk from an Oklahoma dairy last December may have been exposed to the rabies virus.

One of the dairy's cows was confirmed to have rabies after

testing by the OSDH laboratory. Milk from the rabid cow was combined with the milk from healthy cows and bottled prior to sale to the public, so the potential existed for a low level of contamination with the rabies virus during this time period.

Rabies is usually transmitted

by a bite or inoculation of the skin. A small risk could possibly exist, especially with immune compromised people.

Heat treating the milk before consumption would completely deactivate the rabies virus. Raw milk may also contain *E. Coli* and *Salmonella*.

State fair recognized for reducing *E. coli* threat

The International Association of Fairs and Expositions presented the Indiana State Fair an “Award of Excellence” at its annual convention in Las Vegas in December. The state fair won in the category: “Program Designed to Correct an Issue or Problem related to a Competitive or Non-Competitive Agricultural Program.”

The competition included fairs with attendance of 500,000 to one million. The award was accepted



Several handwash stations, like this one, were placed around the fair grounds to make it easy for fair-goers to wash their hands.

by Indiana State Fair Board President Terry Hoffman at the Agricultural Awards Breakfast on December 4th in Las Vegas.

The award was received because of the fair’s successful effort to reduce *E. coli* contamination. The Indiana State Department of Health and the Board of Animal Health also partnered with the Indiana State Fair to develop the award-winning program.

Can you stand eggs on end during the equinox?

The answer seems to be yes, but the related question is whether it can be done other times of the year?



Various reasons have been attributed to the feat of standing an egg on its end, from the equal amounts of daylight and darkness this time of year, to balanced gravitational forces.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), such reasons sound like science but are myths that pop up every spring right along with the grass beginning to turn green. The underlying assumption relating to standing eggs on end is that there must exist some special gravitational balance.

There are many forces acting on an egg when you try to stand it on end on a flat surface. Some people think that the gravitational pull of the sun becomes balanced

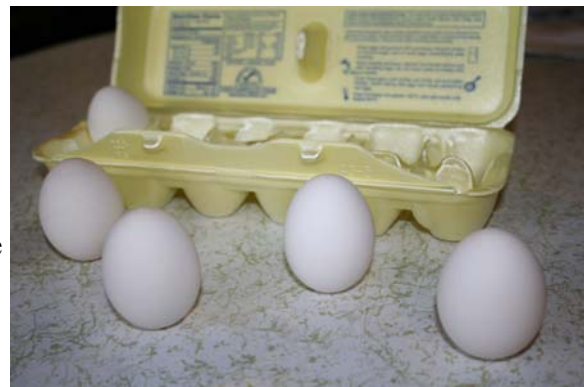
with those of the earth to allow for this phenomenon to occur. However, the moon exerts a much stronger gravitational effect on the earth than the sun, dominating the ebb and flow of the ocean tides of the world. However, the moon's effects are different at each of the equinoxes.

The most dominant force of gravity on a standing egg is the one between the earth and the egg itself. This is determined by the weight of the egg and the force pulling the egg to the surface. To assume that some celestial balance occurs on the spring equinox, is to fall prey to bad science, says the NWS.

Yet some believe that for whatever reason,

the egg-balancing act only works during the Spring equinox, and to a lesser extent, the Fall equinox.

It takes a delicate touch and a lot of patience, but anyone can try this with a fresh egg, preferably slightly warmed.



Four eggs stand unsupported on the kitchen counter of FoodBytes Editor, Ed Norris. This picture was taken a day before the Spring equinox. Ed has had no success other times of the year.



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Bits, Bytes, and Blurbs

Send your questions to the e-mail or postal address above.

- ◆ **Still looking for copies of 410 IAC 7-24? Deb Scott of the Indiana Restaurant and Hospitality Association says copies are available for a nominal fee through the association. Reach Deb at dscott@livengoodassociates.com.**
- ◆ **The Indiana Environmental Health Association (IEHA) has available a revised model food ordinance for local health departments to adapt to their needs. It can be found at www.iehaind.org. An enforcement guidance is also available to promote consistency when inspectors deal with recurring and on-going violations.**
- ◆ **ARACHIBUTYROPHOBIA is**

the fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth.

- ◆ **The FDA has issued draft guidance on what the term "whole grain" may include. This will assist manufacturers with appropriate food label statements related to "whole grain" content.**
- ζ **Guidance documents will be out soon to help local inspectors evaluate "value-added" foods like maple syrup, honey, and sorghum. These operations, if retail, should**

be permitted and inspected by local health departments.

Calendar

IEHA Spring Conference
Thursday, April 20

Operating An Efficient Farmers' Market: A Workshop for Market Masters and Vendors

April 8, 22; May 19; June 15, 16

Better Process Control School
April 26, 27

(Info available via the web site above or IEHA.)