

FoodBytes

Food Protection Program

July, 2010

Indiana State Department of Health

Vol. 11, No. 2

Vonda Allen Retires from Food Protection

Long-time Food Protection staff member Vonda Allen, Wholesale Program Coordinator, retired May 28, 2010 after more than 26 years of service to the public and the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH).

Vonda began her career at ISDH as a field staff inspector, conducting both retail and wholesale inspections. For more than 20 years, she has served as the Wholesale Program Coordinator.

Throughout her career, Vonda has worked closely with the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA). She spent several years coordinating the contract program between ISDH and FDA for ISDH staff to conduct wholesale inspections at FDA regulated facilities.

Commenting on Vonda's contributions, Scott Gilliam, Director of the ISDH Food Protection Program, stated, "Vonda was a key person for the wholesale industry, and she handled the registrations

and inspection assignments for more than 750 facilities across Indiana. She has been a wealth of knowledge and will be sorely missed, but we wish her well in retirement."



Vonda Allen, Wholesale Program Coordinator, retires after a career of more than 26 years in the ISDH Food Protection Program.

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Food Defense Coordinator North Hired

Sarah Popovich began with the ISDH Food Protection Program on May 17, 2010 as the new Food Defense Coordinator North. She will be based in the central office and will have responsibilities in the northern half of Indiana.

Sarah may be reached by phone at 317/234-2882, 317/517-5182 (Cell), or

spopovich@isdh.in.gov. She will be working closely with Travis Goodman, Food Defense Coordinator South, and will be the grant coordinator for the Food Safety and Defense Task Force Grant. Please feel free to contact Sarah to introduce yourself and begin promoting food defense in the northern region.

Changes to the 2009 FDA Model Food Code

Every newly published version of the FDA Model Food Code (MFC) has many changes to correct inaccuracies or clarify certain sections. This article will focus on just a few of the major changes about which all local health departments and the retail food industry must be aware. These changes will eventually be incorporated into Indiana law in some version down the road.

The terms “critical” and “non-critical” are no longer used and have been replaced with “priority,” “priority foundation” and “core”. This was developed by the Criticality Committee of the Conference for Food Protection (CFP) over a 4-6 year period and was done to more accurately reflect the three (3) levels



of actual violations known as “critical risk factor,” “critical,” and “non-critical,” but not described in the MFC. In the past, it was difficult to differentiate between violations that were risk factors and those that were not, since there had only been the choices of “critical” and “non-critical.” The new designations solve this dilemma and are defined as the following:

“Priority item” means a provision in this Code whose application contributes directly to the elimination, prevention or reduction to an acceptable level of hazards associated with foodborne illness or injury, and there is no other provision that more directly controls the hazard. This includes items with a quantifiable measure to show control of

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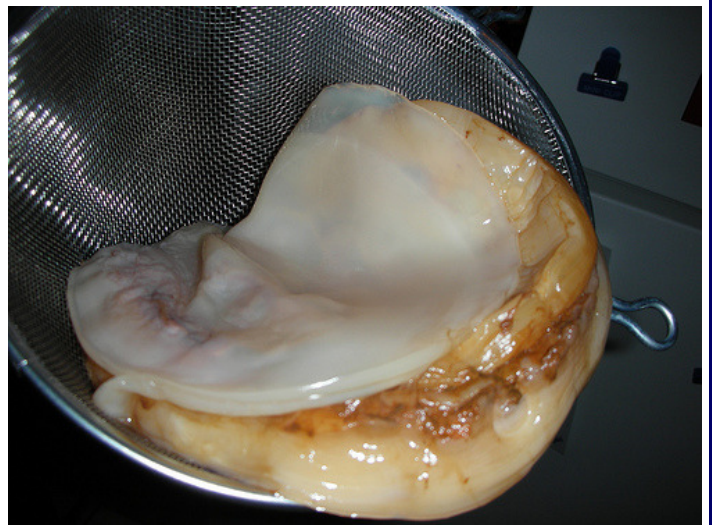
Kombucha Tea: What Is It and Is It Safe?

Kombucha (Kom-boo-cha) tea is sometimes referred to as “mushroom tea” because the starter used resembles a mushroom. It is a product that can be found commercially in many health food stores. There also seems to be a strong “grass roots” interest in home brewing the tea due to its touted health benefits. The tea contains basic ingredients including dried tea leaves, sugar, water, the Kombucha starter colony and may contain other flavorings, such as herbs. It may also contain amino and organic acids, enzymes and polyphenols. The starter colony consists primarily of microorganisms of the *Acetobacter* species as well as yeast cultures.

It originated in Eastern Asia and was introduced into Germany and Russia in the late 1800’s and became popular at the turn of the 19th century. Kombucha tea has been promoted as an immunity-boosting tea, supposedly strengthening the body against a multitude of ailments. Many tea users boast in its medicinal benefits, but there is no scientific evidence to support any of the health claims made for Kombucha tea. Due to the illnesses of two women in 1995, possibly due to the tea although no direct link

could be proven, the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) warned consumers to use

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A Kombucha “mushroom” starter culture. This culture is also referred to as a SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast). Kombucha “mushrooms” can be purchased from various sources on the internet.

Changes to the 2009 FDA Model Food Code (Cont.)

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hazards, such as cooking, reheating, cooling, and hand washing.

“Priority foundation item” includes an item that requires the purposeful incorporation of specific actions, equipment or procedures by industry management to attain control of risk factors that contribute to foodborne illness or injury, such as personnel training, infrastructure, or necessary equipment, HACCP plans, documentation or record keeping, and labeling.

“Core item” includes an item that usually relates to general sanitation, operational controls,



The 2009 FDA Model Food Code considers “cut leafy greens” a potentially hazardous food requiring temperature control.

sanitation standard operating procedures (SSOPs), facilities or structures, equipment design, or general maintenance.

Another significant change was to include “cut leafy greens” as a food product that must have temperature control to maintain its safety under the definition of potentially hazardous food. This is a major change that greatly affects the industry as it did when cut melons, cut tomatoes, and raw seed sprouts were added in previous versions of the MFC.

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Kombucha Tea: What Is It and Is It Safe? (Continued)

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caution when making or drinking the tea. Allergic reactions have been reported by some individuals who have consumed the product.

Kombucha tea is made by steeping the mushroom culture (black tea and sugar) and the resulting mix is allowed to cool and ferment for about one week. The floating “mushroom” which is yeast and bacteria, produces a “baby” mushroom on its surface and it is used to make additional batches until the original mushroom goes bad (turns dark brown).

According to FDA, it is important that the starter culture be obtained from a commercial source. The following items should be considered during the process to promote food safety:

- The product contains considerable quantities of acids (like found in vinegar) that could leach out toxic compounds from containers. Thus, it should not be brewed in ceramic, lead, crystal, plastic, painted or metallic containers.

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Kombucha tea is allowed to ferment for 8-12 days. When the pH is around 2.5-4.6, the tea is ready.

Changes to the 2009 FDA Model Food Code (Cont.)

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The following is the new definition:

“Cut leafy greens” means fresh leafy greens whose leaves have been cut, shredded, sliced, chopped, or torn. The term “leafy greens” includes iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, butter lettuce, baby leaf lettuce (i.e., immature lettuce or leafy greens), escarole, endive, spring mix, spinach, cabbage, kale, arugula, and chard. The term “leafy greens” does not include herbs, such as cilantro or parsley.

Another change is the new allowance for frozen commercially processed raw meats to be stored above ready-to-eat foods. The CFP and FDA have decided there is minimal risk to the public by allowing this practice. It is stated as follows in 3-302.11(A)(1)(c) - *Frozen, commercially processed and packaged raw animal FOOD may be stored or displayed with or above frozen, commercially processed and packaged ready-to-eat food.*

The FDA added a definition of “mechanically tenderized” meats and also added it to the list of foods that shall be cooked to heat all parts of the food to 155 degrees F for 15 seconds under the cooking section of the MFC.

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“Mechanically tenderized” meats are defined in the 2009 FDA Model Food Code. These meats must be cooked to 155 degrees F for 15 seconds.

Kombucha Tea: What Is It and Is It Safe? (Continued)

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- The tea will contain a small amount of alcohol as a result of the fermentation process and amounts normally vary from 0.5% to 1.5%.
- pH normally ranges from 2.5 to 4.5 and the acidic condition helps to promote the growth of the culture. This helps to inhibit the growth of certain bacteria and molds.
- Equipment used in the production process must be clean and sanitary to ensure the product does not become contaminated.
- A clean environment is important to prevent contamination. A separate processing (clean room)



Contamination must be prevented during preparation and storage. Key components of food safety include pH, clean environment, and proper temperature. A contaminated culture will often be identifiable as common mold (green, blue, or black in color). When mold grows on the surface, it is best to discard the culture and the tea and start over.

should be considered for making a wholesome product.

- Complete product labeling is required and may not claim to prevent, treat or cure any specific diseases and/or conditions.

Persons wanting to produce Kombucha tea on a commercial basis (either retail or wholesale) are subject to the same food protection regulations as with any other food or beverage. A host of production and safety information is available for consumers on the internet.

This article was written jointly by Shirley Vargas, ISDH Retired, and George Jones, Southern District Field Staff Supervisor

Changes to the 2009 FDA Model Food Code (Cont.)

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This definition is important since the science demonstrated mechanically tenderized meat products have been potentially subjected to internal contamination during the tenderization process requiring a higher cooking temperature similar to comminuted meats.

Finally, one other significant change was the addition of the definition of “non-continuous cooking” that addresses the practice of partial cooking of a potentially hazardous food. The following definition has been added:

“**Non-continuous cooking**” means the cooking of food using a process in which the initial heating of the food is intentionally halted so that it may be cooled and held for complete cooking at a later time prior to sale or service. It **does not** include cooking procedures that only involve temporarily interrupting or slowing

an otherwise continuous cooking process.

A new section under 3-401.14 was added with very specific requirements to address this kind of process, including having written procedures approved in advance of incorporating this process into practice. This can be a very high risk process if not tightly controlled.

Again, this is only a partial description of the changes to the FDA MFC. For a complete list, please see the following Website:

<http://www.fda/Food/FoodSafety/RetailFoodProtection/FoodCode/FoodCode2009/default.htm>

*A. Scott Gilliam, Director,
ISDH Food Protection Program*

Conference for Food Protection 2010 - Providence, RI

Scott Gilliam, ISDH Food Protection Program Director; Sharon Farrell, ISDH Food Protection Training Specialist; Margaret Voyles, ISDH Food Protection Retail Program Coordinator; Kelli Whiting, Marion County Health Department Temporary Events Coordinator; Stephanie Mohn, Food Safety Manager, Marsh Corporation; Dr. Richard Linton, Professor, School of Food Science, Purdue University; and Dr. David McSwane, Professor, SPEA and School of Public Health, Indiana University; attended the 2010 Conference for Food Protection (CFP) in Providence, Rhode Island on April 9-14, 2010.

The structure of the Conference provides a



The Conference for Food Protection 2012 will be held at the contemporary Hyatt Regency in downtown Indianapolis.



representative and equitable partnership among regulators, industry, academia, professional organizations and consumers to identify problems, formulate recommendations, and develop and implement practices that ensure food safety. It is from this conference that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Model Food Code is derived.

More information will be forthcoming as the CFP 2012 is scheduled to be held at the Hyatt Regency in Indianapolis, Indiana April 13-18.

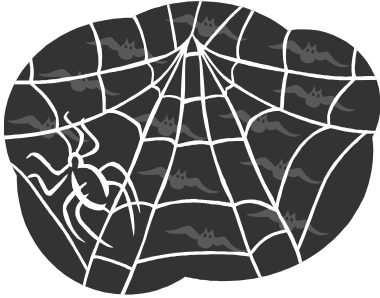
*Margaret Voyles, Retail Program
Coordinator, ISDH Food Protection
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Indiana State Department of Health

FoodBytes

is published three times per year by the
Food Protection Program, Indiana State Department of Health.

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CFP: A Brief Overview...

- ◆ *The Conference for Food Protection is a non-profit organization established in 1971.*
- ◆ *Regulatory, industry, academia, and consumer professionals are represented at the Conference and all have equitable standing.*
- ◆ *The Conference is convened every two years.*
- ◆ *The Conference offers consideration of various food safety issues in a deliberative forum.*
- ◆ *Issues may be submitted by anyone with a food safety or food protection concern provided specific format and timeline requirements are met.*

- ◆ *If an issue is accepted, it is assigned to one of three Councils for deliberation.*
- ◆ *Council I deliberates issues concerning Laws and Regulations.*
- ◆ *Council II deliberates issues concerning Administration, Education, and Certification.*
- ◆ *Council III deliberates issues concerning Science and Technology.*
- ◆ *Approved Conference recommendations may be incorporated into*

the FDA Model Food Code and offered for adoption by regulatory agencies to establish nationwide uniformity.

Send your questions and comments to the e-mail or postal address on this page.

Calendar

September 26-29, 2010

IEHA Fall Educational Conference
Brown County State Park
Nashville, IN

April 13-18, 2012

Conference for Food Protection (CFP)
Hyatt Regency, Indianapolis, IN