

Quarterly Scoop

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PHR1 Public Sanitation & Retail Food Safety

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Trending Violations*:

- Improper Cooking Temperatures
- Improper Handwashing
- Lack of Consumer Advisory

*see pages 3-4 for additional info.

Letter from the Editor

By Kassi Anthony

Hello, everyone!

This last quarter all inspectors have been busy with various projects as we continue community outreach activities. We had a display table at a school nurse workshop to provide information about foodborne pathogens and symptoms of foodborne illness. Resident doctors from Covenant pediatrics and family medicine attended a presentation about our program. We have also visited classes at Texas AgriLife to answer questions and provide resources to cottage food operators.

As this school year winds down, we have turned our focus to temporary events and farmers' markets in the region. Inspectors have been working with event coordinators for Shamrock St. Patrick's Celebration, Bob Wills Day, and Thunder Over Dalhart, among others. We aim to educate food vendors to ensure food safety practices are being followed in preparation for and during these events.

As summertime approaches, we will be visiting youth camps for routine inspections. Afterward, we will return to retail food inspections and investigations. Inspectors will be visiting your facilities more often for ongoing food safety training and implementation.

As always, we would love to hear any feedback from you on this newsletter. Topics for upcoming issues are welcome. Just reply to your inspector at this [email](#). Take care and cook safe!

Good to Know!

By Brittiany Bowling & Leslie Morgan

Nacho Cheese and Chili Dispenser Food Safety Facts (B. Bowling)

Cheese and chili bags must be held at a minimum temperature of 135°F or higher. Dispensers come equipped with an external ambient air thermometer. If this thermometer is missing or not accurate, then an additional ambient air thermometer must be placed inside the machine. Verify the temperature of the cheese and chili by inserting a sanitized probe thermometer into the opened bag. Bags must be preheated to 135°F or higher before they are made available to eat.

***C. botulinum* is a bacterium that produces a neurotoxin that when ingested causes severe illness characterized by double vision, paralysis, and even death.**

Should I turn off the dispenser at night?

No. Dispensers with open bags of cheese or chili must maintain a temperature of 135°F or higher. If the machine is turned off, the bags must be removed and rapidly cooled to 41°F or below. The product must be rapidly reheated to 165°F (within 2 hours) before placing back into the dispenser. Food that does not maintain a safe temperature could potentially grow bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum* toxin. *C. botulinum* is a bacterium that produces a neurotoxin that when ingested causes severe illness characterized by double vision, paralysis, and even death.

How long can an open bag of cheese and chili be held inside of the dispenser hot?

Opened bags may be held for a maximum of seven days. Bags must be marked with the date that the bag was opened. The day it is opened counts as day one. A bag must be discarded by the end of day seven.

What You Need to Know About Farmers' Markets (L. Morgan)

A farmers' market is an event where farmers and other food producers sell food to consumers. It is held at a designated location. A farmer is a person who produces an agricultural product intended for use as a food or raw material. This can include raising crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, aqua-culture, or some form of livestock.



The following things are allowed at a farmers' market **without a permit**:

- Selling whole, intact, unprocessed fruits and vegetables.
- Selling pre-packaged foods that do not require time/temperature controls to limit pathogens.
- Providing samples at a farm stand.
- Conducting a cooking demonstration for educational purposes.
- Cottage food that complies with Texas law.
- Raw honey produced on a farm, not filtered, or wholesale labeled.

A **permit is required** for the following:

- Selling time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods.
- Yard eggs (must be held at 45°F or below and labeled as ungraded with safe handling instructions).
- Meat or poultry processed at licensed/inspected plants in compliance with regulations.
- Fish and other aquatic species possessing license from the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. Also, fish raised in a facility that has an aquaculture license from the Texas Department of Agriculture.

The following are **never** allowed:

- Raw milk.
- TCS foods made in a home kitchen.

For more information visit our website page for [Farmers' Markets](#).

Why...?

By *Mayra Vargas, Lindsey Eudey, & Melissa Hardin*

...Improper Cooking Temperatures (M. Vargas)

It is a common misconception that all food bacteria is destroyed simply by adding heat. The truth is not all foods are cooked equal. Different proteins must be cooked for different times and temperatures to kill bacteria.

- 145°F for 15 seconds:
 - Pork and beef steaks
 - Seafood and fish
 - Eggs that will be for immediate service
- 155°F for 17 seconds:
 - Mechanically tenderized meats (raw ground beef)
 - Ground seafood
 - Injected meats
 - Pooled egg recipes for hot holding
- 165°F for less than one second:
 - Poultry (chicken and turkey)
 - Stuffed fish, meat, pork, or poultry
 - Any reheated food

Even after cooking, food should not remain in the temperature danger zone for more than four hours. The temperature danger zone falls between 41°F and 135°F and is where bacterial growth thrives.



"The only reason for being a bee that I know of is making honey...and the only reason for making honey is so I can eat it."

- Winnie the Pooh

...Improper Handwashing (L. Eudey)

Handwashing is one of the most important things you can do to prevent foodborne illness. Hands carry bacteria, which can be transmitted to food. The greatest risk is when a person uses the restroom and does not wash their hands properly before they handle food. The “dirtiest” part of hands is located under the fingernails. It has the highest concentration of germs and is the hardest part to clean.

Handwashing removes germs that can potentially infect other people through food, but handwashing must be done properly! It takes more than running warm water and soap over the hands.

1. There needs to be friction and scrubbing to remove germs.
2. Your entire handwashing process should run about 20 seconds. Scrub for 10-15 seconds.
3. Dry your hands using disposable paper towels or an approved hand drying machine. (Cloth or reusable towels collect germs on the surface and reapplies them to your hands!)
4. If you touched the water faucet with your dirty hands, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and open restroom doors.

Using these methods will effectively reduce the number of bacteria on your hands and work in preventing foodborne illness in your facility.

...Lack of Consumer Advisory (M. Hardin)

A consumer advisory educates people about the risk of foodborne illness from eating raw or undercooked foods. An advisory is especially important for those in highly susceptible populations. The statement should be displayed on brochures, deli cases, menus, stickers, table tents, placards, etc.

Consumer advisories must consist of two parts: a disclosure and a reminder.

Disclosure includes either:

- a. The food item description that states it is raw/undercooked, OR
- b. An asterisk next to the food item with a footnote at the bottom of the menu stating that it is served raw/undercooked.

Reminder shall include either:

- a. An asterisk next to the food item indicating written information regarding the safety of these foods is available upon request, OR
- b. An asterisk to the food item with a footnote in the menu or other listings with the following statement: “Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk for foodborne illness; especially if you have a medical condition.”

Links & Contacts

[Region 1 - Retail Foods Contact Info](#)

[Texas Interactive Jurisdictional Map](#)

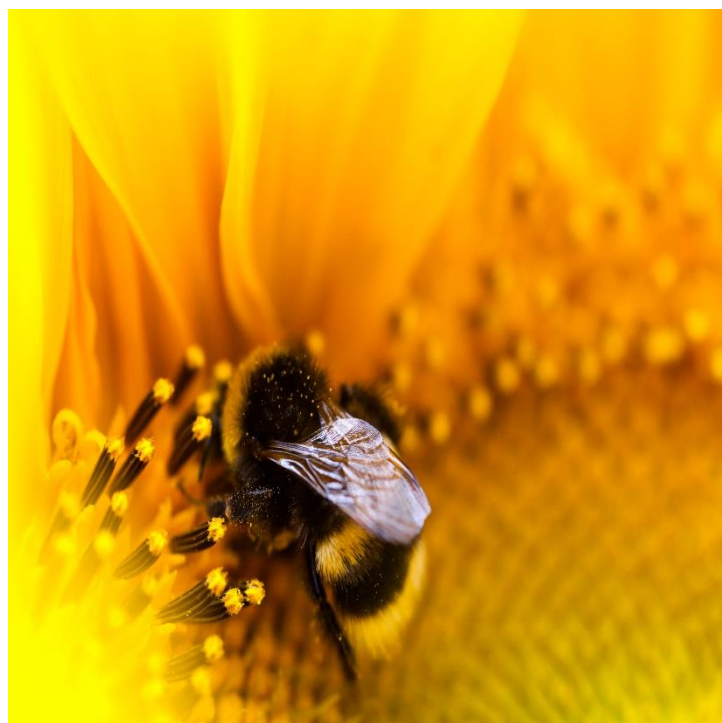
[Retail Food Establishments | Texas DSHS](#)

[Starting a New Retail Food Establishment in Texas](#)

[CFM Examination Providers | Texas DSHS](#)

[Accredited Food Handler Internet \(Online\) Training Programs](#)

[Cottage Food Production Operations](#)



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