

# FRONT BURNER

FROM YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

## WHAT'S SO CRITICAL ABOUT HACCP?

It's true that food poisoning can be a miserable experience for most people. For the young, elderly and those with weakened immune systems, symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever can lead to very serious complications like kidney failure.

Food handlers play a critical role in preventing such health emergencies.



Cooking, cooling, reheating, hot holding, storage and handwashing are just a few of the critical control points in preventing food poisoning. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) is a food safety term that has been around for at least a decade.

Certified food handlers learn all about HACCP in their training courses. The whole point of knowing about HACCP is knowing how to figure out when and how problems can occur with food that can lead to food poisoning.

### "FINED" OUT THE LAW

Knowing about critical control points is more than a good idea. When serving food to the public, it's the law. And Ontario's Chief Justice has recently approved higher fines for breaking these laws. Here's some examples:

- Failure to refrigerate hazardous foods - FINE \$375.00
- Failure to protect food from contamination - FINE \$250.00
- Failure to sanitize utensils, surfaces and equipment - FINE \$50.00 - \$375.00

### THE INSPECTORS CHECKLIST

In an inspection, the Public Health Inspector (PHI) checks for more than cleanliness and sanitation. Handwashing is watched for, cooking and hot holding temperatures are measured. Thawing and cooling methods are noted. Other steps in preparation are checked to prevent or eliminate hazards. Should the PHI find for example, that your refrigeration units are repeatedly without

an accurately indicating thermometer, the inspector can issue a ticket to the operator for each refrigeration unit without a thermometer. This can quickly add up to an unnecessary expense.

### RULES NOT MEANT FOR BREAKING

You can't see, smell or taste the germs that cause food poisoning, and that's why it is imperative to know about the critical control points and stop food poisoning bacteria getting into and multiplying in food.

When preparing any food item, follow HACCP rules:

- ✓ Select ingredients from approved sources
- ✓ Store foods to avoid cross contamination—separate raw food from ready-to-eat food
- ✓ Wash raw produce well
- ✓ Cook foods well - use a probe thermometer to be sure meat is cooked to proper temperatures
- ✓ Sanitize work surfaces and cookware after contact with raw meat, eggs, and soil from raw produce
- ✓ Cool foods quickly, in small portions and shallow pans and then store in the refrigerator
- ✓ Reheat foods quickly to 74°C (165°F)
- ✓ Wash hands often with warm water and soap.



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## Answers To Go

### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT THERMOMETERS?

A probe thermometer is needed to be sure food is properly cooked on the inside.

The "feel" of cold or hot is not enough to ensure food is being stored safely. Check fridge thermometer daily to be sure cold food is at 4°C or below.

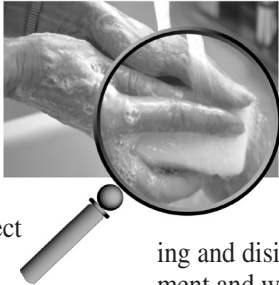
Steam is not a reliable sign of proper hot holding. Use a probe thermometer to check internal temperatures of hazardous foods are 60°C or higher.

Because a food item looks or feels frozen doesn't mean that it is being held at the required temperature. Keep frozen foods at -18°C (0°F) or colder.

# OUTBREAK FILES

## TAKE ACTION AGAINST HEPATITIS A

This past summer news reports have raised concerns about Hepatitis A and food handling. Knowing more about this virus and how it spreads can help protect you and your customers.



Handwashing alone may not be enough to control the spread of foodborne Hepatitis A. Therefore, regular and proper cleaning and disinfection of utensils, equipment and work surfaces that may come in contact with foods frequently is also required.

Hepatitis A is a disease of the liver caused by a virus. It is shed in the feces of infected individuals. Most patients suffer from flu like symptoms, stomach cramps, diarrhea, yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.

The virus is transmitted mainly through what is known as the fecal-oral route—that is, through ingesting the virus with food or water that has come in contact with feces usually from the unwashed hands of an infected person. Sewage discharged into oceans can contaminate shellfish with the virus.

Outbreaks of Hepatitis A have been linked to raw shellfish, and ready to eat foods like salads, sandwiches, vegetables and fruits.

Hepatitis A can survive freezing, persist in fresh and salt water for up to 12 months, or survive for a few days to weeks in dried feces. The virus can also survive for several hours on human hands and for several days on fruits, vegetables, utensils, equipment and work surfaces.

### CONTROLLING THE SPREAD OF FOODBORNE HEPATITIS A

- ▶ Thorough handwashing is a must—especially after using the toilet
- ▶ Regular and proper cleaning and disinfection of utensils, equipment and work surfaces
- ▶ Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before use
- ▶ Wear disposable gloves when preparing ready to eat foods
- ▶ An ill employee should not be handling food
- ▶ All cases of Hepatitis A are to be reported to the Health Unit



## the STOCK POT

### Put germs in their place— down the drain.

Post “Germs—All Washed Up” signs in your public washrooms to remind customers that handwashing is the best defence for health. Free signs or stickers are available from your health inspector.

Check out the new on-line Food Handler Certification program at [www.ingoodhands.ca](http://www.ingoodhands.ca).

Call your local inspector to find out about **PROTON**—a Food Handler Certification course. Get your study-at-home workbook for \$10 and take the one hour exam when you’re ready.



Call 721-7520  
(1-877-721-7520) or click  
[www.simcoehealth.org](http://www.simcoehealth.org)

## RECIPE MAKEOVER

### SEARED HALIBUT ON VEGETABLE CURRY

four 6-8 oz halibut portions  
1 red pepper  
1 sweet onion  
1 medium zucchini  
3 stalks celery  
1 firm apple  
1 mango  
1 cup cooked lentils  
2 Tbsp Sharwoods curry powder  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
1 can coconut milk  
vegetable oil  
white wine

**Wash hands.** Wash and finely dice all vegetables. Sweat them slowly with a little oil in a casserole pan. Add curry and garlic. Dice washed apple and mango in a similar manner and add to vegetables, along with lentils. Cook for 5 minutes, then add coconut milk a little at a time. Add a little white wine. Cook for another 15 minutes and check for seasoning.

Meanwhile, season the fish fillets. **Wash hands and work surfaces** after handling raw fish. Fry fillets in a no stick pan with a little vegetable oil until crisp on one side. Turn fillets over and finish in a hot oven until just cooked. Serve at once on top of the lentil mixture, along with some basmati rice. **Refrigerate left overs** immediately.

**Nutritionist Suggestions:** Smaller portions of meat, fish or poultry - about the size of a deck of cards — fit well with Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Stretch your recipe farther in a healthy way by reducing the size of halibut portions to 3 - 4 oz, and serving with a larger portion of basmati rice.

Original recipe courtesy of Eric Madden, Beild House Country Inn, Collingwood

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#### Note from the nutritionist:

Vegetable and lentils are good sources of dietary fibre. Boost fibre intake even more and add a nutty flavor to this dish by serving it with brown basmati rice.