



Skagit County Food Notes

News Items of Interest for the Food Service Industry of Skagit County

Skagit County Public Health Department
Environmental Public Health Division
2010 edition



Welcome to the 2010 edition of our Food Safety Newsletter. Please email any comments or suggestions to food@skagit.wa.us . We hope you enjoy this year's edition.

Alert! Food recalls seem to be more common. Filberts, ground beef, spices, what next? For up-to-date information, see the following websites:
<http://www.recalls.gov/food.html> or <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/recall.htm>
In addition, maintain good communication with your suppliers. They often are notified quickly of a manufacturer's or grower's recall.

On the menu:

- Pest control
- What do we know about Bacillus cereus?
- Composting Food Waste
- Updates in the Health Department for 2010
- Award-winning Food Establishments

Starters:



Have you visited the website recently? If not, check it out [here!](#) You'll notice that it's easier to find answers to your questions about food worker cards, download permit applications, and even download the Washington State Department of Health Food Worker Manual. There is also a hotlink to email questions to food program staff and direct access to FDA product recalls.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome!

www.skagitcounty.net/food

Waiter! There's a Fly in my Soup!!



Get flies to “Buzz Off!”

We sometimes receive complaints of fly problems in various food establishments. There are simple measures you can take to limit the potential contamination of food products.

Flies are attracted to odors and light; as the weather cools, they also seek warmth. Manure and rotting materials serve as breeding ground for egg-laying. In return for the nice nesting sites, they become efficient transportation for bacteria like *E. coli* and *Salmonella*, perhaps stopping for lunch in your store or restaurant.

Here are some suggestions to discourage their presence:

- Keep garbage containers tightly covered and dumpsters away from entrances.
- Outdoor lights can be directed away from the building; replacing lights with sodium vapor bulbs makes them less attractive to insects.
- Close doors and windows and make sure screens are secure. Screen any fan or other opening to the outside with 16 mesh screening.
- Install an “air curtain” as a long-term, effective solution to open doors.
- Keep your facility clean: empty garbage often, clean out drains, keep equipment sanitized, etc.
- Capture flies indoors on sticky strips. Hang only in areas away from food preparation.
- Be especially vigilant of “landing sites”. Food, food preparation tables, food processing equipment, utensils and plates need to be protected. This may be accomplished by:
 - Covers, or
 - Sanitizing immediately before use

Food must be covered at all times - this not only offers protection from insects, but also from contamination by people sneezing on or touching the product.



Don't make this your daily special!

Let's be serious about *B. cereus*.....



Bacillus cereus is a toxin-producing bacterium which can cause two types of **food-borne illnesses**.

- One type (emetic) is characterized by nausea, vomiting and abdominal cramps developing 1 to 6 hours after eating. It is often associated with rice dishes that have been cooked and then held at warm temperatures for several hours. The toxin is **not** destroyed by reheating.
- The second type (diarrheal) causes abdominal cramps and diarrhea following a longer incubation period of 8 to 16 hours. It is frequently associated with cooked meat or vegetable-containing foods held at improper temperatures.

In either type, the illness usually lasts less than 24 hours after onset. It is not passed person-to-person, but can cause a large outbreak. This common bacterium is found in dirt and has been isolated from dried beans, cereals and other dried foods such as spices, seasoning mixes and potatoes.

Since the bacteria grow best at temperatures ranging from 41°F to 140°F, infection may be prevented if cold food is refrigerated and if hot food is held at greater than 140°F before serving.

Award-Winning Restaurants.....



Over 45 restaurants and food facilities have earned the coveted Blue Ribbon Award in 2009 from the Health Department. "How may I get one?" you may ask. It's easy to do. Your facility must be free of critical "red" violations on two consecutive inspections. If your inspector fails to offer you the award to post in your facility – ASK! And you may join these other fine establishments throughout Skagit County.

Various Schools	Gentleman Gene's	Same Ol' Grind
Anderson Road 76	Gordo's Tacos	See's
Bayside Sweets and Treats	Iron Skillet	Shari's
Bubble Island	Island Café	State Street Deli
Buzz Inn	Johnny Carino's	Subway
Cocoanut Kenny's	LaConner Country Inn	The Roost
Cold Stone Creamery	Lorenzo's	Trumpeter Ale House
Common Ground	Papa Murphy's	Wendy's
Costco	Quizno's	Wild Iris
Fairhaven Market	Rockfish Grill	

Main Course:



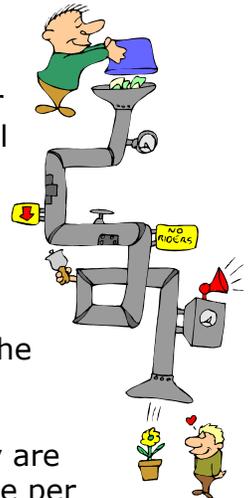
Food Waste Recycling (How to Reduce Waste and Save Money)

Your food establishment can be on The Skagit Green Team and save money at the same time! All you need to do is put food waste and food-soiled paper products in a separate container from Waste Management and put less in your garbage dumpster that eventually ends up in a landfill. The separate container with the food wastes goes to Skagit Soils; where it is turned into compost, then used as a soil amendment.

All food scraps (truly ALL food scraps and even tea bags, coffee grounds, and food soiled paper, boxes, and paper cups) can go in your food waste bin. You'll want to keep plastics, silverware, gloves and foil out of this container.

It's easiest if you set up two separate containers in the kitchen (or food processing area) that are clearly labeled and train your staff to pay attention to which bin they're scraping plates or tossing plastic utensils. From a food safety standpoint, careful attention to detail in the kitchen is rewarded by your food establishment inspector!

In short order, you should notice that your costs to haul garbage away are reduced. For instance, if you rent a dumpster that gets picked up twice per week, you may notice that it only needs to be emptied once per week once your food waste recycling program is firmly established. This means more profit for your business and assurance that your food scraps are going to a local business where it is turned into compost then used to possibly grow more food. So you save money, support another local business plus get to tout your "Green" food establishment!



For more information, contact Craig at Skagit Soils 424-0199, Waste Management in Burlington 757-4067 or the Health Department at 336-9380.



Ask the Inspector:

When do I need a catering permit? Or do I need a temporary permit?

Frequently we get questions about using a catering permit instead of a temporary event permit. So when should you get a catering permit? Or a temporary permit? Under which circumstances might you need neither but can operate under your regular restaurant permit?

You need a catering permit if you are hired by a person or persons to prepare food in your approved kitchen and serve it somewhere else. The guests do not pay you directly but you are paid by the person or persons who hired you. For instance, an engaged couple hires you to cater their wedding. The couple pays for your services. You agree on a menu and prepare the food in your approved kitchen then transport that food to the reception site where you set up and serve the guests. You may complete final preparation at the site.

Another catering example is if you are hired by a person or organization to serve food at a fundraising event. You agree on the menu, are paid by the hiring person or corporation/company, and then prepare the food in your approved kitchen. You transport the food to the event location, complete any final preparation and serve it to guests.

If you do not have a catering permit or do not intend to cater frequently, a Temporary Event Permit from our department may be required for a fundraising or other public event. This permit is valid for a single event only. You may not use your catering permit for a festival, farmer's market or fair where you prepare and portion out servings for which you are paid by individual customers. That type of food service requires a Temporary Event Permit.

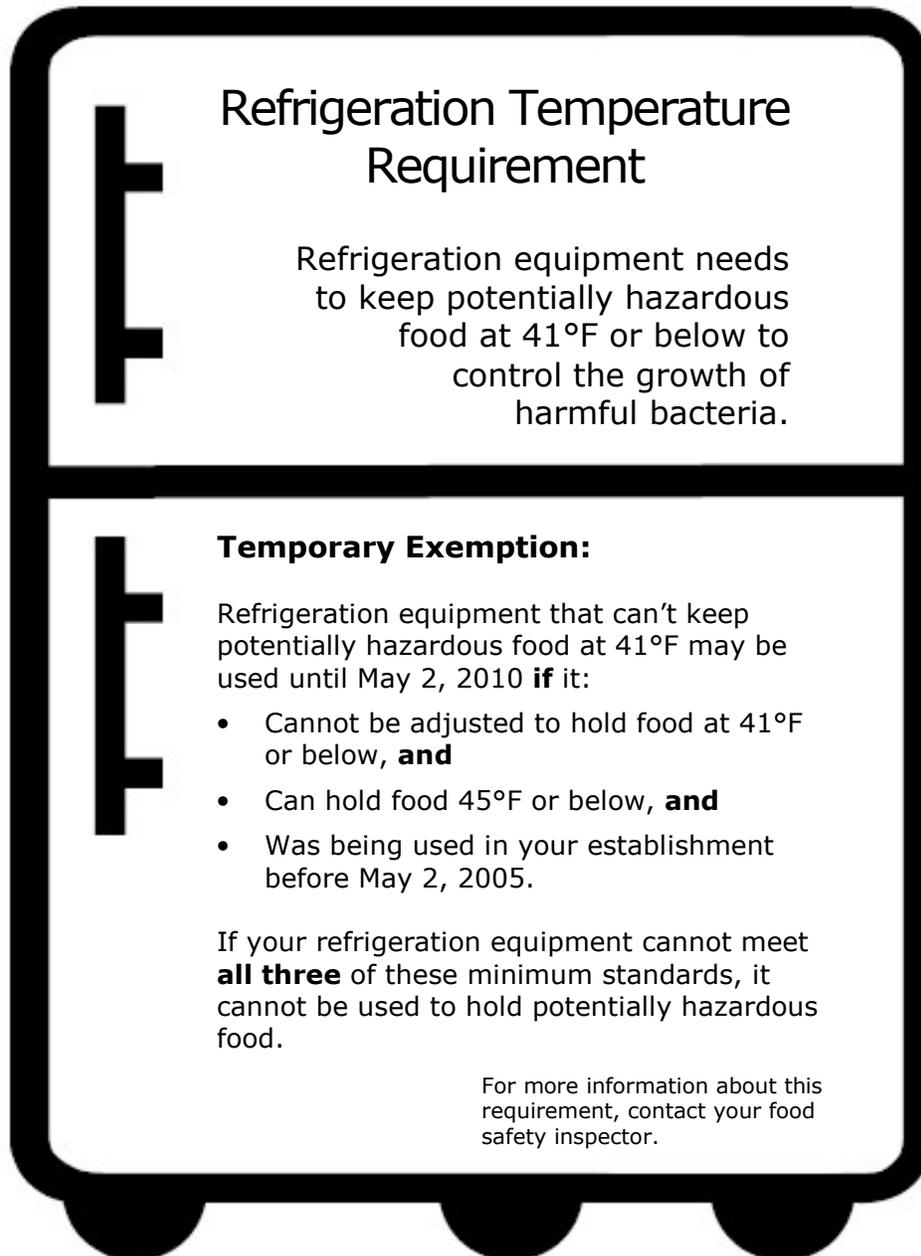
When can you provide food outside of your restaurant without additional permits? You may prepare food in your restaurant for pick up by the customer. You may prepare food in your restaurant for transport within 30 minutes to your customers' location to drop off the items. In both examples, the food must be at the appropriate temperature (either hot or cold for perishable items) at the time that it leaves your restaurant.

Still confused? Please call our department at least two weeks prior to your event so that we can advise you which permit will best suit your needs.



Refrigeration “grandfather” rule to end in May 2010

The deadline is approaching to sunset the inadequate refrigeration rule (see illustration below). If you have refrigerators that cannot maintain foods at 41°F or less, the equipment must be replaced with an acceptable model. If you have any questions, contact our department.



Sam N Ella's Heartfelt Food Safety Advice



Dear Sam and Ella,

What is the deal on this refrigeration rule? My grandfather gave me this refrigerator for my restaurant and I have it set as low as it can go. My food inspector tells me I am going to have to replace it. How come?

Signed,
Chillin' in the County

Dear Chillin',

Science marches on. Research found that an organism called *Listeria monocytogenes* can live and thrive at cold temperatures. But it grows much more slowly at 41°F than at 45°F. This bacterium can cause severe illness in sensitive people and stillbirths in pregnant women. Many foods may have *Listeria* contamination; some of the most common are deli meats, soft cheeses and unpasteurized milk. By keeping these ready-to-eat foods colder than 41°F, you can prevent potential illnesses. So replace that refrigerator and reduce the risks.

Side Dishes and Tasty Tidbits:



Did you know?

Food worker cards are required of all food workers in permanent food establishments, even those with ServSafe training. New workers must obtain a card within 14 days of hire. A 30-minute video, followed by a 32-question multiple choice test gets you the card! Cost is \$10 and is valid anywhere in Washington for two years. Cards or photocopies of cards must be posted or otherwise accessible to inspectors for review.

There are two ways to test:

Come into the Health Department between 8:30 and 3:00 pm any weekday. No appointment necessary.

OR

If you have a large number of employees in need of food worker cards and if your establishment is in Skagit County, you may request our Food Worker Testing Packet. The packet contains the video, test booklets and answer sheets. Food managers may borrow the packet for up to one week. Show the video to staff at a convenient time, administer the test, collect \$10 from each test taker and bring everything back to us. We will correct the tests and issue cards within 5 working days. Call 360-336-9380 to reserve the packet – ask for Dorothy.

WE ARE AVAILABLE

Our office is open Mon - Fri 8:30-4:30 pm

Our staff often performs inspections on weekends as well.

In an emergency after business hours, please contact our department through the Skagit Emergency Dispatch (911).



PROPOSED MANDATORY CLOSURE DATES in 2010

County offices may be closed on the following dates to help with the Skagit County budgetary shortfall:

January 15	July 2
February 12	August 20
March 19	September 3
April 2	October 11
May 28	November 12
June 11	December 27

Please check the website for updates.

Inspectors will still be in the field as needed.

FOOD WORKER CARDS

Food worker card testing occurs daily 8:30—3:00 pm. Allow 45 minutes to watch a video and take the exam. Multiple languages are available. Bring picture ID and \$10 cash or check. For special arrangements, contact our office.

How to Find Us:

700 S. 2nd Street, Room 301
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360-336-9380
Fax: 360-336-9401

E-mail: food@co.skagit.wa.us

We're on the web!! www.skagitcounty.net/food

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