

Serving Up Food Safety



From the Food Protection
Management Program (FPM)
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service

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Thawing Fish Properly

Vacuum packaged fish is a great way for retailers and consumers to purchase and store fish. This type of packaging helps keep the fish from drying out and helps increase the shelf life. A type to consider is REDUCED OXYGEN PACKAGED (ROP) FISH, which often bears a label indicating that it is to be kept frozen until time of use. The FDA Food Code states that fish packaged in this way must be removed from the reduced oxygen environment prior to thawing.

Why is this so important? There are two primary pathogens of concern, *Clostridium botulinum*, and *Listeria*. *C. botulinum* is a spore-forming anaerobic bacterium that can live and grow in low oxygen environments, making it a concern for these types of products. When conditions are optimal the spore will produce a toxin that is deadly.

Listeria is a bacterium that can grow and multiply at low temperatures making it a concern in the frozen environment. These bacteria can cause serious illness, especially in highly susceptible populations. Vacuumed or ROP packaged fish can be very tasty if handled and prepared properly. It is crucial to follow proper thawing recommendations when preparing these products at home or at work.

Source: https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/open_your_vacuum_packed_fish_before_thawing

Article by: Rebecca Dittmar

Investigating Foodborne Illnesses – The Basics

Have you ever considered what happens with a foodborne illness investigation?

The Who: A representative from one or more agencies will work with you to try to solve the outbreak.

The What: What food product is causing the illness? The original point of contamination must be found to help solve this.

The When: The investigation typically takes place during or after an outbreak occurs. Epidemiologists work alongside many agencies to try to find the source of the outbreak.

The Where: Agencies will investigate each stage of the suspected foods processing to try to determine what was contaminated and how it was contaminated.

The Why: To protect public health! Efforts are made continuously from agencies, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers to ensure the food we eat is safe.

It is highly encouraged to always work with inspectors or regulators to the best of your ability during an outbreak investigation. Both cooperation and coordination help foster long term relationships and can help speed up the investigation.

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services-Foodborne illness investigation pamphlet

Article by: Rebecca Dittmar



To find the next Certified Food Manager or Food Handler class in your area, go to our website:

<http://foodsafety.tamu.edu> or visit us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/foodprotectionmanagement



Texas Cottage Food Law - Do You Know What You Can Sell?

Do you want to sell certain food products from your home? Well, you can! The Texas Cottage Food law allows an individual operating out of their home to sell certain food products directly to the consumer at specific locations, and with certain labeling requirements. There are other guidelines, please go to <https://dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/cottagefood/default.aspx> or contact your local Family Community Health (FCH) Agent in your county.

You want to keep in mind the definition of baked good: it is an item prepared by baking the item in an oven (cookies, cakes, bread, Danishes, donuts, pastries, pies, and other items prepared by baking). It does not include a potentially hazardous food (time/temperatures control for safety food - PHF/TCS).

What are some examples of food you can sell as a Cottage Food Production Operation?

Bread, rolls, biscuits, sweet bread, muffins, cakes (birthday, wedding anniversary, etc.), pastries, cookies, and fruit pies. Canned jams and jellies, dry herbs and dried herb mixtures, candy, coated and uncoated nuts, unroasted nut butters, fruit butters (certain ones), popcorn and popcorn snacks, dehydrated (using a dehydrator) fruit or vegetables, including dry beans, cereal (including granola), dry mix, vinegar, pickles (cucumber only), mustard, and roasted coffee or dry tea (in a non-liquid form).

What are examples of foods you are **NOT ALLOWED** to sell?

Fresh or dried meat or meat products including jerky, canned fruits, vegetables, vegetable butters, salsas, etc., kolaches with meat, fish or shellfish products, canned pickled products such as but not limited to: corn relish, pickles, sauerkraut; raw seed sprouts, bakery items that require any type of refrigeration such as cream, custard, or meringue pies and cakes or pastries with cream cheese icings or fillings; milk and dairy products including hard, soft, and cottage cheeses and yogurt; cut fresh fruits and/or vegetables, juices made from fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh fruits dipped or coated in chocolate or similar confections, ice and/or ice products, barbeque sauces and ketchups, focaccia-style breads with vegetables and/or cheeses, dried pasta, and beverages including but not limited to lemonade, juices, and hot chocolate. For more information or if you have questions please contact your local county extension agents or DSHS.

Source: <https://dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/cottagefood/default.aspx>



Article by Julie Prouse

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