



Foodfacts

**Madison Department of Public Health
Environmental Health Services Section**

Madison, Wisconsin

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Health Department Wins National Award!

The Madison Department of Public Health has won the prestigious 1997 Samuel J. Crumbine Consumer Protection Award for its food protection program. The award is named in honor of Dr. Samuel J. Crumbine (1863-1954), a sanitarian/physician and public health pioneer who was renowned for his innovative methods of improving public health protection.

This award has been presented annually since 1955 to one local food protection agency which demonstrates excellence and continual improvement in a comprehensive food protection program. **It is also a tribute to the many outstanding food establishments and dedicated owners and operators found throughout Madison.**



Back Row (left to right): Duane Jackson, Jim Steinhoff, Randy Holveck, Jim Kaplanek, Greg Pallaske, Kelly Heibel. **Front Row:** Dawne Smith, Tommye Schneider, Beth Cleary.

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The Crumbine award is sponsored by the Conference for Food Protection in cooperation with: American Academy of Sanitarians, Association of Food & Drug Officials, Foodservice & Packaging Institute, Inc., Industry Council on Food Safety, International Association of Milk, Food & Environmental Sanitarians (IAMFES), National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO), National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), Public Health Foundation Enterprises, Inc., NSF International, and Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. The award was presented in July at the NEHA, IAMFES and the NACCHO annual conferences and reflects the achievements of the program from 1992 through 1996.

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Certified Operator Responsibilities

By Greg Pallaske and Jim Kaplanek

In 1995, the State Division of Health mandated that all restaurants employ at least one operator who had passed a food safety proficiency exam, and had registered with the State.

Reactions to operator certification have been mixed, but generally positive. While some view this as just another hoop to jump through, most operators are enthusiastic about the knowledge and ideas gleaned from the operator certification classes.

However, the Certified Operator's responsibility does not end with passing the exam and posting the State certificate on the wall.

Unfortunately, we often find that the Certified Operator has the knowledge, but is not transferring it to the front line employee. The Certified Operator **must** act as a teacher, trainer, and leader of food safety at the restaurant. **This training role is important for all staff who need to keep current with the latest food safety issues, but is especially important for new employees.**

There are many ways the Certified Operator can communicate food safety to other employees:

1. In-house training program: Develop a basic food safety training program that will be given to each new food handling employee. This training should cover things such as safe

temperatures (proper cooling, heating, reheating, and holding temperatures), proper handwashing procedures, cross-contamination, safe food storage, proper sanitization, and basic food borne illness information. (Need ideas on this? Call your inspector. He or she will be happy to help you).

"The Certified Operator's responsibility *does not end* with passing the exam and posting the State certificate on the wall."

2. Leadership by example: Employees, especially when new, learn by watching. Be sure to set an example by using the techniques you learned about safe food handling.

3. Perform self-inspections: Stand back and watch how things are being done. Are there problems which training would solve?

4. Select certain topics for training to discuss during staff meetings. These sessions should be short, but get the message across (most of us retain information better when given in small segments). Repeat topics when necessary.

5. Correct problems as you see them. Use these problems as opportunities to teach and reinforce the principles of safe food handling.

6. Teach safe food handling from the first day on the job. This should be a fundamental part of training for all new staff.

The Health Department encourages establishments to have several Certified Operators. This is especially helpful when turnover occurs. The presence of a Certified Operator, teaching and supervising, is so important that **you must notify the Health Department when a Certified Operator terminates employment.** Although the restaurant code allows 6 months to replace a certified operator, their role should be so critical that the restaurant can't properly function without one.

Food handler certification is an important tool in recognizing and reducing problems which may lead to outbreaks of food borne illness. The more education and training provided to food handlers, the better the chances of meeting the goal we all share: providing safe food to our customers!

* * *



Tests that Look for Bacteria in Food

You may soon encounter a MDPH employee collecting samples from soft-serve ice cream and shake machines. "Frozen Desserts" are a delicious treat on a hot summer day, but these products provide an excellent place for bacterial growth if temperature controls or cleaning procedures are lacking. High numbers of bacteria affect taste and texture, and more importantly, may lead to foodborne illness outbreaks. Since bacteria are invisible to the naked eye, the only way to know ice cream has been handled properly is to analyze samples in a public health laboratory.

When a frozen dessert sample exceeds standards, a public health sanitarian will contact the restaurant's manager to discuss the results. In many cases, problems are easily corrected by implementing more aggressive cleaning procedures or changing the product rotation cycles.

Future sampling activities will include deli products such as sandwich meats and ready-to-eat salads. These foods are increasingly responsible for outbreaks of listeriosis, a bacterial infection that has been linked to miscarriages and death in people with decreased immunity.



The focus of this food testing program is not regulatory; rather it is an opportunity for us to work closely with you, the operator, to identify and correct real food handling problems and unsafe conditions that may exist in your facility. A likely side benefit to you will be a better quality product with longer shelf life. See you soon at the soft serves and the delis!



Cyclo, cont'd

It is thought, that once ingested, even small numbers of oocysts can cause illness. The incubation time (the time from consumption to symptoms) is usually 3-5 days. Some people may show no signs of illness, others may experience watery diarrhea, frequent explosive bowel movements, loss of appetite, loss of weight, bloating, increased gas, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever or fatigue. These symptoms may last for a few days up to a month. Symptoms may also relapse which is why cases of *Cyclospora* often go unreported. **Food handlers experiencing diarrhea at any time must not handle food. For prolonged periods of diarrhea, medical attention should be sought.** *Cyclospora* infection is easily treated with antibiotics. There is no immunity to *Cyclospora*, one infection does not limit a person from becoming reinfected.

To help prevent *Cyclospora* infection:

1. Avoid water or food which may be fecally contaminated; only use food/water from reliable sources.
2. Thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables before preparation or consumption.
3. Practice good personal hygiene and hand washing.

As we continue to expand our global markets, we must continually practice good food handling techniques to combat these new and emerging pathogens.



National Award, *cont'd*

Aspects of the MDPH food protection program which the Crumline Award Jury found impressive include:

- ♦ Refinement and improvement of traditional program while moving emphasis towards educational, customer-based, approach backed by capable and efficient enforcement.
- ♦ Increased staff training and involvement in program management and improvement.
- ♦ Improved data collection and analysis in evaluation of program, and increased outreach to hospitals and clinics to encourage more accurate reporting of food borne illness.
- ♦ Increased outreach to industry through a popular newsletter, increased training programs, achievement awards and creation of a Safe Food Advisory Committee.
- ♦ Ongoing integration of HACCP principles into training and inspections.
- ♦ Increased involvement of Health Commission and community in the food protection program.

The Madison Department of Public Health is the first health department in Wisconsin to receive this honor.

We are committed to continuously improving the exchange of information between the Health Department and the food industry; let's continue to work together to make Madison number one in the country for safe and healthful dining!



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