2015 - the FPC year in review

This year witnessed an increased interest in the Food Protection Committee. Even with restricted budgets limiting travel for many, attendance remained high at each meeting, and those not able to travel utilized the conference call-in line.

The first meeting of the year featured Brian Baker with the Office of the Indiana State Chemist discussing illegal pesticides that are showing up in food establishments. Many of these products, he said, are illegally imported and are not properly labeled.

The second FPC meeting hosted Chef Thom England, Head of Ivy Tech’s Culinary Arts program. He discussed the latest food production trends, and how that may challenge inspectors.

Meeting number three had Joann Xiong of the Marion Co. Health Dept. describing “coned” meats that are frequently used in ethnic facilities. She offered suggestions about what to look for during inspections. Dr. Barbara Almanza from Purdue talked about a recent survey concerning public perceptions of food inspections.

Sylvia Garrison and Kris Thomas served as FPC co-chairs.

The FPC meetings are open to all IEHA members, but voting on issues is restricted to the voting members as specified in the IEHA constitution. The FPC selects speakers for the Fall Educational Conference food sessions.

What you should know about...

**Service animals**

When is a service animal not a service animal? Answer - when it's not a properly trained dog.

Peter Berg, Project Coordinator for Technical Assistance, Great Lakes ADA Center, talked to attendees at a Food Protection concurrent session at the recent IEHA Educational Conference. He said there is a misconception as to what is a service animal. Just because someone claims to have a service animal with them doesn’t make it so. Tasks performed by a trained dog must be directly related to the person’s disability.

The ADA requires “reasonable modifications” to policies and practices.

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires agencies, businesses, and schools make “reasonable modifications” to policies, practices, and procedures for people with a disability. This means a dog might be in a foodservice establishment where he otherwise is not allowed.

(Continued on page 2)
What do those little labels on fruit, vegetables say to us?

Fruits and vegetables offered to grocery store customers often come with those (hard to remove!) stickers attached. These labels contain a PLU or price look up code for the cashier to enter at checkout.

The PLU number gives us other information like whether the produce is organic, versus conventionally grown. The number will be four or five digits.

For example, a conventionally grown banana will have the code 4011. An organically grown banana will start with a 9 and be 94011. A PLU code beginning with an 8 means the produce is genetically engineered, or GMO (genetically modified organism). But this is typically hypothetical as there is no evidence that producers are identifying GMOs in that way. This may be due to the fact that GMOs remain controversial, or their use is more widespread than consumers realize. It has been estimated that up to two thirds of foods purchased contained genetically modified ingredients. There is no requirement that GMO foods be so identified.

Although organically grown produce can cost half again as much as conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, customers seek them out as they are grown with far fewer pesticides.

NY sushi chef complains about no bare hand contact

The New York City Department of Health (DOH) has a “no bare hand contact” provision in its health code, similar to Indiana. But one sushi chef is complaining that the DOH inspectors are hurting his business by enforcing the rule.

*Food Safety News* has reported that one of three sushi establishments by a single owner has been closed following six straight inspections that revealed ongoing bare hand and temperature violations. The restaurant faces permit revocation if violations aren’t corrected.

Owner and chef David Bouhadana calls the rule “BS” and that sushi is being “ruined” by having to freeze the fish and wear gloves. He claims inspectors don’t understand about “high end” sushi where feeling the rice with bare hands is necessary.

Bouhadana has acknowledged (%Continued on page 3)

What you should know about (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

wouldn’t be allowed.

Service dogs need to be trained but owners are not required to provide proof of any specific training. Dogs “in training” are not considered trained.

But there are limits. Although service animals are allowed in restaurants, they should stay with their handlers on the floor. Dogs should not sit at the table or be fed.

If it’s not obvious if the dog is a service animal, (dogs don’t have to wear any identifying harnesses or patches) only two questions may be asked. One, is the dog required because of a disability, or two, what task has the dog been trained to perform? One may not ask for “proof,” ask the dog to perform any task, nor ask about the person’s disability.

A service dog may only be excluded from a foodservice establishment if it’s out of control or not house broken.
What’s bugging you? Flies are disease carriers

Many restaurant goers think flies are just a nuisance, but flies can be a serious disease threat for a food service operator. Flies are associated with the spread of diseases, from E. coli and Salmonella to Diphtheria and Dysentery, although the total number of pathogens could be over a hundred.

An overflow crowd at a Food Protection breakout session during the recent IEHA Fall Educational Conference listened as Ron Szumski with Ecolab Pest Elimination said knowing fly “biology” helps one know how to treat a fly problem.

He said flies are “synanthropic” meaning they enjoy benefits from a close association with humans and animals, although large flies live only about a week to 12 days. But this relationship is not beneficial to humans. A large fly might lay hundreds of eggs in her lifetime. One fly can potentially carry enough bacteria to make someone sick, since one fly can carry millions of bacteria, Szumski says.

Flies have an excellent sense of smell and good eyesight, which helps draw them to food debris. They easily cross contaminate from one surface to another.

Keeping flies away
Regular thorough cleaning is key to handling a fly problem. Szumski says you can’t eliminate flies if the outer doors or windows are open, unless the air pressure is greater inside, so air moves outward. Flies may be breeding elsewhere, possibly miles away, and coming to the establishment for food.

Screens in good repair should cover outer openings that are otherwise open. Air curtains also work since flies don’t like the air currents. Flies do like dark, shiny surfaces that appear to a fly to be a hole. Once a food source is found, flies will congregate, drawn to the odors. Flies are also attracted to human excrement.

Eliminate food and water sources, that is, clean up spills and garbage regularly - at least daily. This includes outside around dumpsters. Don’t overlook where there is standing water. Capture devices do work, but since they contain attractants, never place them over or near food.

Treatments might be best handled by a professional who understands how to treat the problem and not just spray everywhere. It is important to inspect first to determine the type of fly problem an establishment has, then treat.

Fly facts
you probably don’t want to know
Flies can’t eat solid food. So they regurgitate eaten food, bacteria, enzymes, and stomach acid onto food. The food dissolves, allowing the fly to suck it all up!

NY sushi chef complains (continued)

(Continued from page 2)
edged that gloves are only worn when an inspector is spotted.

“We have a code word,” he said, to put gloves on, smile, and wait until the inspectors leave.

The DOH uses a grading system to reflect inspection scores. Bouhadana said when he complained about having to throw food away, his grade was lowered to a “C.”

“How am I supposed to run a legit business charging $100 a person with a C grade?,” he questioned.

It appears that the no bare hand contact rule is meeting the greatest resistance in places where it has more recently been required. California recently adopted, then rescinded, its no bare hand contact requirement for sushi preparation after high end sushi chefs complained.
**New computer chip could detect when food is going bad**

A new company called C2Sense is trying to respond to the fact that good food is wasted at a yearly global cost of upwards of $750 billion.

Working from research underway at MIT, C2Sense is working to develop sensors that can detect ethylene and biogenic amines, to monitor how ripe fruit is, or the freshness of meat and poultry, according to the company website. They say their cost-effective sensing system could improve food quality and deal with the food waste issue by allowing growers, shippers, distributors, retailers, and consumers to make informed decisions about food quality. The company says their sensors are “chemiresistors” containing a sensing material that changes resistance based upon the concentration of an analyte (the substance undergoing analysis).

Implementation and use of the sensors and the analysis of data will require a trained technician.

Note that this technology is intended to detect evidence of food quality. It will not determine food safety, although for food about to go bad, safety concerns may not be far behind.

**Most foodborne illness outbreaks are local**

The CDC reports that millions get sick from the food they eat yearly, but most of these illness are localized. Even though multistate outbreaks only account for about 3% of the total, these foodborne illness outbreaks can account for a third of hospitalizations and more than half of the deaths.

CDC says the deadly bacteria involved in outbreaks that cover more than one state cause more serious illnesses. Salmonella, E. coli and Listeria caused 91% of the multistate outbreaks from 2010 to 2014. Those pathogens can be found in a wide variety of foods from vegetables and fruits to beef and chicken - foods that are distributed across the country.

CDC adds that these outbreaks can be harder to detect, investigate and solve. A single contaminated ingredient can end up in multiple foods, adding to the challenge. Better state cooperation and improved disease surveillance helps handle outbreaks.

**Future food might not seem like food at all**

A virtual reality experiment might eventually mean one could eat any “food” without worrying about calories or food allergies. The experiment, Project Nourished, uses Oculus Rift headsets and utensils with sensors that provide all the sensation of eating foods like steak or pie, but none of the calories or carbs, or risks of allergic reactions.

Project Nourished is being headed by Jinsoo An, founder of Kokiri Lab in Los Angeles. He said he was inspired by a scene in a Peter Pan movie where Peter learns to eat imaginary food with the Lost Boys when the table looks empty. A virtual reality headset and utensil sensors for motion and food detection are necessary to create an actual dining environment. There are also “aromatic diffusers” that make it possible to smell the food before eating. (Continued on page 5)
Do the millions of Americans with diabetes face a higher risk of foodborne illness?

Although not categorized as high risk, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says there are several reasons why diabetics face a higher illness risk. Immune systems normally fight off infection-causing pathogens, but immune systems of diabetics may not quickly recognize harmful bacteria, leaving them at increased risk for infection.

The gastrointestinal tract normally allows foods and beverages consumed to digest normally. FDA says diabetes can damage the cells that create stomach acid, and the nerves that help the stomach and intestinal tract move food through. This damage may cause the stomach to hold onto consumed food longer, allowing pathogens to grow.

Kidneys, which work to cleanse one's body, might not be functioning properly, holding on to harmful bacteria, toxins, and other pathogens. Diabetics are more susceptible to infections, which means if a foodborne illness is contracted, the illness is likely to be longer, require hospitalization, or perhaps lead to death.

FDA says this translates to being more vigilant in following the food code when handling, preparing, and consuming foods. FDA spells this out in four steps.

1. Clean
Wash hands often with soap and water. Clean cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops with hot, soapy water, rinse, then follow with an approved sanitizing step. This should happen anytime the utensils have touched any raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Be cautious of using cloth towels because if not properly used, cloths can spread around more than they pick up. Sometimes, paper towels are preferred.

2. Don't cross-contaminate
Separate raw meat and poultry from ready to eat food. Separate different species of meats from each other. Be cautious about reusing marinades without first reheating them to 165°F.

3. Cook
Use a food thermometer to assure all raw or reheated foods meet or exceed the required internal temperature.

4. Chill
Cool leftover food according to the two tier method in the code. Make sure cold holding is below 41°F. Remember that frozen meats should never be thawed at room temperature.

Do diabetics face a higher risk for foodborne illness?

Food for the experiment come from hydrocolloid polymers and gums - agar, konjac jelly, and gum Arabic, which are derived from sources like algae, seaweeds, fruits, vegetables, and seeds and mimic the foods. Sensing taste, texture, and smell are part of eating food and whether it is appealing and enjoyable.

An says early experiments have focused on foods with a simple geometry, like steak, lasagna, or pie. Other foods with irregular shapes, or fall apart easily, will be harder to mimic, he says.

Future food might not seem like food (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

Food for the experiment come from hydrocolloid polymers and gums - agar, konjac jelly, and gum Arabic, which are derived from sources like algae, seaweeds, fruits, vegetables, and seeds and mimic the foods. Sensing taste, texture, and smell are part of eating food and whether it is appealing and enjoyable.

An says early experiments have focused on foods with a simple geometry, like steak, lasagna, or pie. Other foods with irregular shapes, or fall apart easily, will be harder to mimic, he says.

Testing is underway, and funding will determine how quickly this new food choice will be more widely available so diners can eat what they want without regret, says An.

(some info and photos from Project Nourished website)
The Food Protection Committee (FPC) is one of four standing subcommittees of the Indiana Environmental Health Association. The committee meets approximately four times per year with dates and locations chosen by the members. Its focus is to discuss food safety related issues of interest to its members. While all IEHA members and guests may attend meetings, only voting members, as specified in the IEHA Constitution and Bylaws, may vote. Meeting information is disseminated by email. To be added to the email list, contact one of the co-chairs, or your IEHA chapter representative.

FPC Co-chairs: Sylvia Garrison and Kris Thomas.

FPC Newsletter Editor: Ed Norris

Morsels

- 40,000,000,000 - the number of Oreo cookies sold around the world each year.

- 5 - the number of times those cookies would circle the globe if lined up.

- The CDC is saying the total E. coli 026 cases connected to Chipotle now numbers 52. Officials say that most of the ill customers ate at more than one Chipotle restaurant. The chain has voluntarily closed 43 of its restaurants in Oregon and Washington temporarily as the investigation into the cause continued. As one observer put it, you can’t spell Chipotle without the letters e, c, o, l, i.

- FPC Officers for 2016 selected by the voting members are Sharon Pattee of the ISDH Food Protection Program, and Jennifer Asbury from Purdue University.

- Following the tragic shooting in San Bernardino, CA, that recently caused the deaths of 14 people, many of them employees of the San Bernardino County Health Dept., and injuring many more, the California Environmental Health Association requested all environmental health professionals join in a moment of silence at 2 PM, EST, December 9. NEHA, FDA, CDC, AFDO, and other organizations took up the call to join the tribute and local health departments were asked to participate. Numerous news accounts now say an employee carried out the attack as the group was beginning a holiday party following a half day of in-service training.