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**POINTS OF INTEREST**

- There are rising concerns about bits of plastic from storage containers leaching into food.
- This is especially true if the food is fatty, salty, or acidic.
- Glass containers are preferred for food storage.
- “Food grade” might not be sufficient for safety.

## Some hand sanitizers called toxic

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning to consumers not to use certain hand sanitizer products being offered for sale in the United States. The products are manufactured by Eskbiochem SA de CV in Mexico and distributed by Saniderm Products, or UVT, which is recalling products it distributed.

The UVT hand sanitizer has a lot number “0530” and an expiration date of “04.2022.” The Saniderm Products hand sanitizer is labeled with lot number “53131626” and the words, “Manufactured on April/1/20”.

Testing by the FDA re-

vealed samples of various products from the two manufacturers contained high levels of methanol and no ethyl alcohol, which is recognized as a sanitizing agent. Methanol is not acceptable as a hand sanitizing ingredient.

Exposure to methanol is likely toxic and leads to methanol poisoning. Any person exposed should seek immediate medical attention. The FDA notes that significant methanol ex-



*Products like this were found to contain methanol, not ethyl alcohol and are recalled. Don't use it!*

posure can lead to nausea, vomiting, headache, blurred vision, permanent blindness, seizures, coma, permanent nerve system damage, and death. Those who ingest products containing methanol are at the most risk.

Some brand names included “All-Clean Hand Sanitizer”, “CleanCare NoGerm Advanced Hand Sanitizer”, “Lavar 70 Gel Hand Sanitizer” and “Saniderm Advanced Hand Sanitizer”.

## What you should know about...

### PLASTIC IN FOOD

With the abundance of plastic containers available for food storage, concerns are rising about the significance of tiny bits of plastic leaching into the food in the container. WebMD reports that

plastic, though small, can be expected to migrate to the food, especially if the stored food is fatty, salty, or acidic.

In any individual case, the amount of plastic transferred is said to be safe, but what about the long-

term effect? And the problem is plastics are all around us, so the cumulative effect is higher. Part of the concern is, WebMD reports, that the chemicals that get into food have not been

*(Continued on page 2)*

## COVID-19 leads to food service changes

Buffets may never be the same. As foodservice operators (and some local health departments) decide how food may be served safely with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, some foodservices are trying some new techniques.

Gone, at least for awhile, are “self-service” food displays, where diners can get their hands on serving utensils that others have touched. And many facilities have eliminated or reduced customer use of self-serve beverage machines.

As reported by *Travel Pulse*, Wynn Las Vegas opened its buffet restaurant, but with notable

changes, like physical distancing, touchless technologies, and disposable or even menus downloadable to smartphones. At Wynn Las Vegas Buffet, “all-you-can-eat” will involve servers who will bring diners unlimited servings of many foods. This change will come at a cost to the customers, however with

prices there ranging from \$37 for lunch to \$66 for dinner.

Many foodservices with buffets have not reopened as operators decide if they can still serve cus-

tomers under the COVID-19 restrictions. Many have turned

off their self-service beverage machines, filling beverage orders from behind the counter or if beverage machines are on, telling customers they must request a new cup for refills. Beverage machines and ice disposal

areas are often overlooked by inspectors, and can harbor mold and pathogens.



The self-service buffet may now be a dining option of the past.

## What you should know about... (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

proven to be safe, but rather they haven't been proven to be “unsafe.”

Investigators are looking at two types of plastics, bisphenol A and phthalates. It is known that these can have negative health effects on humans.

“It's not that it's been proven safe but rather it hasn't been proven unsafe.”

FDA has responsibility to test “food contact substances.”

Even though a plastic product may be considered “food grade”, there are many types of plastics used, and plastic contamination remains a concern.

Heating food in plastic containers makes the contamination worse.

Frozen foods that come in ready-to-heat microwavable containers are likely safe for single use, but it's recommended to not reuse those containers. Wash them and then recycle.

Until further guidance comes to address the potential of contamination of food stored in plastic, inspectors can still advise operators of the concern and suggest leftover food be stored in glass containers as much as possible.

## FPC meets via conference call

The Food Protection Committee held its regular June meeting via conference call. Co-chairs Sarah Dallas and Amy Ayers wanted to keep the committee active during ongoing pandemic restrictions, and decided a conference call would work best. During the meeting, IEHA chapter representatives were con-

firmed along with academia and industry representatives. Voting members of the committee are: ISDH - Sharon Farrell; Southeastern - Brandon Perkins; East Central - Sharon Breckenridge; Central - Melissa Ackerman; Northeast - Carrie Allen; South-



ern - Nicole Wagner; West Central - Ricki Campbell; Wabash Valley - Ed Norris; Northwest - Dean Schmidlapp. The Academia and Industry representatives are Jennifer Asbury and Rong Murphy respectively.

The next meeting is August 27.

## Where have all the grocery store choices gone?

The pandemic has changed the food landscape. As *mashed.com* reports, IGA stores at one time, might offer 40 different varieties of toilet paper. Now, perhaps four. Progresso offered 90 varieties of soup, but now, half that. The pandemic, plus supply chain issues, has led big food businesses to scale back on less efficient or less profitable options to focus more on main items. The variety might have fallen by a third, but companies see this as a way to scale back.

It's not just stores. Places like McDonald's have dropped menu items, like salads and all-day breakfasts, and chicken tenders

and parfaits may be gone, too. IHOP, Taco Bell, KFC, and many others are also cutting back on less popular items or those harder to make. Subway is also quietly eliminating some menu items, not for lack of customer interest, but due to supply issues.

The mindset 60 plus years ago was to offer as many choices as possible, but that proved to be overwhelming to shoppers, which can increase stress, not wanted now during a pandemic.

Sanitizer wipes seem to have

disappeared for good, but sanitizer is coming back. Suppliers couldn't anticipate the run on sanitizer, paper towels or toilet paper, but the last two are on store shelves again. Researchers found that with TP, it wasn't hoarding so much that

caused the shortage, but usage. With people home more, home TP usage went way up. Commercial paper is a different product made differently, and there was no shortage of it.



## Pandemic challenges university foodservice

Over 30,000 students are expected back on the Purdue University main campus in July. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, and precautions necessary to control the spread, how will foodservices be affected?

Environmental Technician Jennifer Asbury, responsible for foodservice inspections, described the needed changes as "sobering" and students could be in for a shock when they arrive.

Because there can be hundreds of students gathered together at one time in dining halls, the first change is that there will be no inside eating on campus. Residence hall students will see menus posted, and what line to follow for various foods. Then

food will be provided packaged "to go." Students will be spaced in lines following social distancing. Tents will be set up outside dining halls for students to eat.

Since the Student Union is closed, food trucks will be allowed on campus, which could also help

with potentially long lines at meal time.

Jennifer says sanitizing controls will increase everywhere and food employees will get mandatory health screenings. And *Plexiglas* shields will be in evidence at food checkouts and in classrooms. Masks will be required of everyone on campus.

Other campus changes will affect students other than dining. No events on or off campus will have more than 50 people.

Study spaces on campus have been redesigned to add space between students, and guests are urged not to visit campus. Life on campus will significantly change for students and staff.

"Students could be in for a shock when they arrive."

### SALAD RECALL UNDERWAY

At least thirty states in the U.S. and all of Canada are under a voluntary recall of salad products made for various labels by *Fresh Express* because of the potential some might contain *Cyclospora*. The bagged salad products all have product codes "Z178" or lower regardless of brand name, and "best by" dates the second week of July.

The products all came from the Streamwood, Illinois facility. Over 200 people have been affected, all in the Midwest.



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## FOOD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

[www.iehaind.org](http://www.iehaind.org)

### IEHA MISSION:

*To promote, preserve and protect environmental public health in the State of Indiana, and to encourage a spirit of cooperation among all environmental health stakeholders while serving its members in the regulatory, industry and academic communities.*

The **Food Protection Committee (FPC)** is one of four standing subcommittees of the **Indiana Environmental Health Association, Inc.** 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:** Sarah Dallas, Amy Ayers

**FPC Newsletter Editor:** Ed Norris

## Tidbits and morsels

With closed restaurants slowly re-opening, one aspect of the foodservice industry seemed to do well all along - food trucks. Many media outlets have reported a noticeable increase of mobile food trucks either operating from fixed locations, or traveling into neighborhoods in larger cities to serve customers. It has been reported that some neighborhoods have booked food trucks weeks in advance to come to their areas. Some vendors with brick and mortar locations have been able to offset much of their lost business.



A survey by the Foods Standards Agency (FSA) in the United Kingdom finds that half of the respondents have eaten packaged salads and packaged cooked meats that were past their dates. This was

mostly because of food affordability concerns resulting from the Coronavirus outbreak. FSA says the foods surveyed were ones that could pose a risk to food safety.



Add one more food product to the list of food items going away possibly due to changes prompted by the pandemic. (See story on page 3.) As reported in *Food Safety News*, parent company Coca-Cola is dropping its juice and fruit smoothie brand “Odwalla” saying it had been “assessing” the product’s marketing for years.

But food safety attorney Bill Marler of Marler Clark, is not sorry to see the brand go. Marler’s firm represented victims, of a foodborne illness outbreak in 1996 implicating *E. coli* O157:H7 in unpasteurized ap-

ple juice under the Odwalla brand in which one child died and dozens were sickened. FDA followed with a recall of all such juices.

Marler Clark contends that the company didn’t test its juices since it didn’t want to document its juices were unsafe.



If you can’t make the Food Protection Committee meetings in person, there is usually a conference call-in line available.