

If it Smells Good it's Safe to Eat... or is it?

by John Rizzo

As discussed last month; if we follow the basic rules for safe food handling, we stand a real good chance of keeping ourselves and our families safe from foodborne illness. *(for more information go to:*

http://www.thehamptonnews.net/images/Take_Precautions_Food_Poisoning_.pdf

There are a lot of common myths and misunderstandings when it comes to food safety. How many times have you thought that you had a bout with a 24 hour bug? Maybe, but then again; maybe not. We do not often associate the similar symptoms with food poisoning because we may have ingested the tainted food several days prior.

Here's one of the most common misconceptions when it comes to preventing food poisoning. We pack our sandwich for lunch and purposely leave off the mayonnaise to avoid getting sick. Unless you're making that mayonnaise from scratch, there is little to worry about. Commercial mayonnaise is made with pasteurized eggs and either lemon juice or vinegar, which will inhibit the growth of bacteria. On the same subject, potato and macaroni salad can spoil and make you sick, but the mayonnaise isn't the culprit, it's the potatoes and the macaroni. Both are subject to the Bacillus bacteria. When preparing mayonnaise based salads; it's wise to chill all the ingredients before blending them together. Otherwise, the mayonnaise acts as an insulator and keeps the other ingredients from cooling down quickly.

Did you know that you are at higher risk of developing food poisoning from foods prepared at home than in a restaurant? Most professional food handlers are educated in safe food handling techniques and take all precautions to eliminate the risk of an outbreak. Many of home chefs learned from their parents and can inadvertently put their families at risk. Remember that times have changed and with a global food market, and new strains of bacteria, we have to be more diligent about handling food safely.

And lastly, it's not uncommon for home chefs to prepare something ahead of time and feel that it's necessary to let it cool at room temperature before putting it in the refrigerator. This couldn't be less true. It's vital to get the food cooled quickly; in fact large containers of hot food should be separated into smaller containers so it can chill rapidly. Leave the lid off until it's completely cool.

If you take a few simple precautions while preparing and serving food from home; you will significantly decrease the risk of an outbreak of food poisoning.

Creamy Fresh Fruit and Mint Salad

Yield: 8

Blueberries	1 Cup	Cream Cheese, Softened	4 oz
Diced Cantaloupe	1 Cup	Lemon Juice	1 TBL
Grapes, Halved	1 Cup	Milk or Cream	2 TBL
Strawberries, Sliced	1 Cup	Powdered Sugar	1/8 Cup
Pineapple Chunks	1 Cup	Whipped Topping	1 Cup
Kiwi Peeled, Sliced	1	Mint Leaves Chopped	2 TBL

Wash all the fruit well before preparing. In a large mixing bowl, combine the fruit and chopped mint leaves, gently mix. Let stand in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours.

Meanwhile, with an electric mixer, whip the cream cheese, lemon juice and milk or cream until soft; add the powdered sugar and continue to whip until ribbons appear on the bowl.

Place one cup of fruit in a serving bowl and top with a dollop of cream cheese mixture.