

Consuming Thoughts

by

Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension
Home Economist for
Berks Co.



Have you ever purchased a food product and found that it contains a foreign object or is less than appetizing, or actually makes you ill?

If so, you have several avenues of recourse.

For example, your hot dog has a strip of plastic inside, your canned chili contains a metal washer, you think a restaurant dinner made you ill, or a sugar-coated roach was in your box of cereal (true stories), don't hesitate to make a report to the proper agency.

The following guidelines from the Food Safety Inspection Service will help you know how to report problems, and thereby protect your health and your rights as a consumer.

For help with restaurant food problems, call the restaurant owner to report the problem. If the problem is serious, also contact the Health Department in your city, county or state.

For complaints about food products that do not contain meat or poultry — such as cereal — call or write to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Check your local phone book under U.S. Government, Health

and Human Services, to find a FDA office in your area.

The FDA's Seafood hotline is 1-888-SAFE-FOOD.

In order for the USDA to investigate a problem with meat, poultry, or egg products, you must have: 1. The original container or packaging; 2. The foreign object (the plastic strip or metal washer, for example); and 3. Any uneaten portions of the food (refrigerate or freeze it).

Information you should be ready to report to hotline personnel on the phone includes the following:

- Your name, address, and phone number.
- The brand name, product name, and manufacturer of the product.
- The size and package type.
- Can or package codes (note UPC bar codes) and dates
- Establishment number (EST) usually found in the circle or shield near the "USDA passed and inspected" phrase.
- Name and location of store and date you purchased the product.
- As a courtesy gesture, it is important to inform the store and/or the product's manufactur-

er even if you don't choose to make a formal complaint to the USDA.

If you think you are ill, see a physician. 1. If an injury or illness allegedly resulted from use of a meat or poultry product, you will also need to tell the hotline staff about the type, symptoms, time of occurrence and name of attending health professional (if applicable). 2. If you can't reach the hotline staff or if an injury or illness allegedly resulted from restaurant food, call your local Health Department. 3. If an injury or illness allegedly resulted from non-meat food products, call or write the FDA.

The bottom line: If you sense there's a problem with any food product, report it and don't consume it.

"When in doubt, throw it out."

If food is not fit for human consumption, do not feed it to an animal.

Cumberland County 4-H Quiz Bowl Team Places First



The Cumberland County 4-H Farm Safety Quiz Bowl Team is pictured above with their coach. They placed first in the 4-H division at the 2003 Pennsylvania Farm Show. From left: Sara Gutshall, Morgan Creek, Megan Kutz, Levi Smith and their coach, Kris Speers.

Regional Christmas Tree Meeting Scheduled In Hazleton

HAZLETON (Luzerne Co.)— The seventeenth annual Northeast Regional Christmas Tree Growers Meeting and Trade Show will take place Saturday, March 1, at Genetti Lodge and Conference Center in Hazleton from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The meeting is sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Topics to be discussed include the following: Agri-Tourism: Taking Choose and Cut to the Next Level; Weed Control Update; Rhabdocline Needlecast,

Chemical Control Research; Canaan Fir Keepability Study; Terminal Bud Selection on Fraser Fir and Elongated Hemlock Scale.

The purpose of this meeting is to educate new and established growers on the most up-to-date cultural and marketing practices available.

Attendance at this meeting qualifies licensed pesticide applicators to receive credits towards recertification. Update training credits will be assigned by the PA Department of Agriculture.

Changes in the meeting agenda may result in adjustments in the assigned credits.

There is a fee for this program and enrollment will be limited to the first 200 people who pre-register. All registrations must be postmarked by February 21, 2003.

For a registration form contact Penn State Cooperative Extension of Susquehanna County at (717) 278-1158. For additional information, contact the Carbon County cooperative extension office at (570) 325-2788.

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