

Consuming Thoughts

by

Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension
Home Economist for
Berks Co.



Each year more than six million Americans fall prey to food poisoning, according to statistics compiled by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Usually associated with boust of nausea and diarrhea, food-borne diseases can be serious.

CDC estimates that about 9,000 deaths occur annually as a result of eating contaminated and mishandled foods.

While many types of foods—from meats to salads, even fruit and baked goods—can lead to food poisoning, a frequent culprit is seafood. Fish and shellfish are highly perishable commodities. They are protein foods with a high moisture content that can support the rapid and progressive growth of organisms causing foodborne diseases.

Here are a few suggestions for choosing safe seafood: Buy seafoods at a store or market with a reputation for selling only the best quality fish and shellfish.

Check around and shop only where you feel confident. Consumers run a higher risk of having problems when they deal with an unknown seller. Check to see that fish is stored properly. Fish

should be kept in a separate seafood case on a bed of ice.

Fish fillets and steaks should not directly touch the ice, which will leach moisture and flavor. Fish steaks should be displayed in a single layer and fillets stacked no more than two deep on a thin metal tray or on a plastic-film barrier to the ice. Shucked or shelled shellfish meat and peeled, raw or cooked shrimp should not have direct contact with ice, nor should live shellfish be buried in ice. Whole or dressed fish can be on the ice as long as the head end faces downward for proper drainage. Price tags should be wedged in ice or lemons—not in the fish itself.

Use your senses as a guide for determining freshness. When buying whole fish be sure that:

- The eyes are raised and clear
- The color of the fish is bright and shiny
- The area underneath the gill is pink, never brown or green
- The flesh is elastic. When pressed it bounces back, leaving no indentation
- There are no strong or "off" odors. Fresh fish does not have a fishy odor.

Fish fillets and steaks should have moist firm flesh. Clams, oysters and mussels are usually bought live.

The shell should be only slightly opened and will snap shut tightly if tapped. Never buy a clam shell that is fully open and/or doesn't move when touched. Shellfish should come from certified dealers. Live lobsters and crabs should be lively and heavy for their size. Lobster will curl its tail underneath its body when removed from water.

When purchasing frozen seafood, look for products that are solidly frozen. All moisture and vapor proof wrapping should fit tightly. Don't purchase products that are soft, have ice crystals, any sign of discoloration or white patches, which indicate freezer burn.

Fresh seafood should always be cooked. Because of the high incidence of viral foodborne outbreaks caused by eating raw shellfish harvested from polluted waters, Consumers are at risk if they eat raw clams or oysters. Fish should also be cooked. Those who enjoy sushi are also taking a real risk. Since fish is so delicate it should be cooked and eaten as quickly as possible and preferably the same day it's purchased.

Ask your seafood retailer to pack the fish in a plastic bag, then place it in another ice-filled bag. Until cooking, store fresh fish in the refrigerator at a setting of 30-34 degrees. (Check your refrigerator temperature occasionally, using a good thermometer).

Remember that fish must be handled with special care if quality and safety are to be maintained.

Philadelphia Flower Show Opens March 2-9

PHILADELPHIA — The world-renowned Philadelphia Flower Show opens March 2 through March 9.

Located at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, 12th and Arch Streets, Philadelphia, the show encompasses 33 indoor acres.

Free hourly lectures and demonstrations are offered each day to Flower Show visitors. More than 140 vendors will sell flowers, and garden and craft-related supplies in the marketplace.

Ticket prices are \$24 opening day, March 2; \$22 March 8 and 9; \$20 Monday through Friday March 3-7). Children ages 2-12 are \$10 any day.

For more information, check out the Website: www.flower-show.com.

Cutting All Carbs Not A Good Idea

COLUMBUS, Ohio — *I have an allergy to wheat and dairy products, and I am trying to cut all carbs to help me lose weight. Can you give me a list of foods that contain carbohydrates?*

That would be quite a long list. Many foods contain carbohydrates, and most dietitians frown on the idea of taking such radical approaches to the diet. "Everything in moderation" is a good rule of thumb. Extreme measures almost always fail where weight loss is concerned.

With your allergies, you of course must be careful.

The Food and Drug Administration estimates that about 1.5 percent of adults have food allergies, along with 6 percent of children younger than 3. That equates to about 4 million Americans; about 150 die from food allergies each year.

According to the FDA, the most common foods to cause allergies in adults are shrimp, lob-

ster, crab and other shellfish; peanuts; walnuts and other tree nuts; fish; and eggs. In children, eggs, milk, peanuts, soy and wheat are the main culprits.

Children usually outgrow their allergies to milk, egg, soy and wheat, while allergies to peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shrimp usually stay for life. Most adults who have allergies never get rid of them.

Dietitians recommend that people who want to cut down on carbs avoid refined carbs such as white bread, pastas, white rice and sweets.

You're probably already doing a lot of this because of your wheat allergy. On the other hand, incorporating unrefined carbs could be more difficult for you because of the allergy. Still, brown rice, beans, vegetables, fruits, nuts and some cereals are all examples of non-wheat, carb-containing components of a healthful diet. Don't mix them just because you think it might be easier to lose weight.

Haul Away Your Savings

4.5% Financing up to 48 months*

In addition, save \$200.00 (U.S.) when you purchase an attachment with your tractor.**

5420 COMPACT UTILITY TRACTOR

- 65-hp, 4-cylinder, low-emission, diesel engine
- Hydraulic wet disk brakes are self-equalizing and self-adjusting
- Easy-access service points



JOHN DEERE

NOTHING RUNS LIKE A DEERE

www.JohnDeere.com

VALLEY AG & TURF, L.L.C.

141 BYERS LANE
WATSONTOWN, PA 17777
(570) 538-3557



*Low rate financing available to qualified buyers. Offer expires April 30, 2003 and is subject to approved credit on John Deere Credit Installment Plan for commercial use. 20% down payment required. Some restrictions apply, so see your dealer for complete details and other financing options, including financing for consumer use. Available at participating dealers. Prices and models vary by dealer. Offers available on new equipment and in the U.S. only.

**Offer available February 1, 2003 through April 30, 2003. A maximum of \$200.00 of attachment bonus per each new tractor sale. Available at participating dealers. Prices and models may vary by dealer. Offers available on new equipment and in the U.S. only. Prices and savings in U.S. dollars.

02000 01 47563