

# FoodWise

BABERGH'S FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3

## Firth's Focus



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Welcome to the third issue of *FoodWise* – the newsletter aimed at keeping food businesses up-to-date with health and hygiene issues.

The public's awareness of some food safety issues has probably never been higher. Recent local court cases, including the one involving a Salmonella outbreak at a Chinese restaurant in Wickham Market (page 4), bring the issue of food hygiene firmly into the wider public domain.

Salmonella contamination of eggs is a well known food safety issue. But did you know that ice can become contaminated with harmful bacteria? That is why in this issue we have included a major article on how you can ensure that any ice you use is safe (pages 1 & 2) – particularly topical with spring and summer not that far away!

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## Ice - Make Sure Your Drinks are Safe!

When we travel abroad one of the pieces of advice we're often given to try and avoid stomach upsets is 'don't have ice in your drinks'. But it's safe in the UK isn't it? Well, not necessarily. A study of the microbiological quality of ice cubes served in bars and restaurants, including premises in the Babergh district, revealed that almost half did not meet the required standards recommended for human consumption due to poor hygiene when they are handled.

Dr Suzanne Surman of the Health Protection Agency's Specialist and Reference Microbiology Division said "ice-cubes have been found to cause outbreaks of gastrointestinal disease in the past and to prevent this from happening again it is important that they meet the required standards. In this study we took samples from both ice buckets and ice machines in various outlets and found that 44% of samples contained coliforms, 5% contained E.coli, and 10% of samples contained enterococci".

Of 18 samples taken from premises in Babergh in August 2003, 12 were unsatisfactory due to the presence of coliform bacteria. These types of bacteria are normally associated with human intestines. They can contaminate ice if your staff do

not wash their hands after going to the toilet and then go on to touch ice machines, ice buckets or handling utensils. This type of contamination has the potential to cause illness in customers who are served drinks containing contaminated ice.

So what can you do to ensure your ice is safe? The Environmental Health Departments in Suffolk have produced a leaflet 'Safe Ice for



Drinks', which gives detailed advice on safe preparation and handling of ice. Some of the main issues to be aware of are:

- Ice machines should be located in a food room, away from potential sources of contamination such as cleaning chemicals. They should be connected directly to a mains supply, and serviced and cleaned according to the manufacturers instructions.

*please turn to page 2*