

Food for Thought



Environmental Health • Issue 7

Spring/Summer 2019

Restaurant Meals Program (RMP)

Apply Today to Become a Participating Restaurant

You can help provide a crucial service to some of Orange County's most vulnerable people.

The County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) is recruiting local restaurants to participate in the Restaurant Meals Program (RMP). RMP allows eligible elderly, disabled and homeless CalFresh recipients the ability to buy prepared meals from participating restaurants using their Golden State Advantage Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

The program expands meal options for eligible recipients who may not have the ability to prepare their own meals, have a place to store or cook food, or who do not have access to a grocery store.

SSA piloted RMP in 2018 in Santa Ana and Anaheim, and based on its early success, the program is now available countywide.

For more information on RMP, and to see a list of restaurants currently participating, please visit <http://ssa.ocgov.com/calFresh/calFresh/rmp>. All questions should be directed to OC.RMP@ssa.ocgov.com or by calling the RMP Hotline at (714) 245-6013.



Oysters – The Raw Truth

Oysters are a popular seafood delicacy throughout the world – consumed both raw and cooked. Unfortunately, each year approximately 80,000 people in the U. S. who consume raw oysters will become ill with vibriosis- an illness caused by an infection of the Vibrio variety of bacteria.

The young, elderly and those with suppressed immune systems are at a higher risk of severe illness or death from this foodborne illness. So that the public is made aware, purveyors and restaurants that serve raw oysters are required to prominently post warning signs conveying the higher risks to these individuals (contact our office to obtain required signage - see contact info at the bottom of page 2 of this newsletter).



WARNING

THIS FACILITY OFFERS RAW OYSTERS FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO. EATING THESE OYSTERS MAY CAUSE SEVERE ILLNESS AND EVEN DEATH IN PERSONS WHO HAVE LIVER

DISEASE (FOR EXAMPLE ALCOHOLIC CIRRHOSIS), CANCER, OR OTHER CHRONIC ILLNESSES THAT WEAKEN THE IMMUNE SYSTEM. If you eat raw oysters and become ill, you should seek immediate medical attention. If you are unsure if you are at risk, you should consult your physician.

In California, sales restrictions are imposed on oysters harvested from the Gulf of Mexico due to some of the highest V. vulnificus levels found among oyster stocks harvested nationwide, especially during the warmer months of April through October.

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NEW Food Safety Laws for 2019

Single-Use Plastic Straws

Effective this year, full-service restaurants can only provide single-use plastic straws to customers if they are requested. What classifies a restaurant as full-service? Typically a full-service restaurant is one that primarily serves food to be eaten on site, including escorting customers to their seats, taking and bringing out orders and delivering checks to customers.



Kid's Meal Drinks

I have a children's meal on my restaurant menu! How does this apply to me? If your children's meal includes a beverage, the default beverage must be water, sparkling water, flavored water, or unflavored milk or a nondairy milk alternative.



Oysters – The Raw Truth

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The following safety measures should be followed to prevent or minimize incidents of vibriosis:

- Buy raw oysters and seafood only from trusted reliable sources, which will provide proper product labels and harvest tags available for review.
- Eat oysters fully cooked - especially stocks from the Gulf of Mexico.
- Wash hands with warm soapy water after handling raw oysters or seafood. Thoroughly wash open wounds or cuts on skin with soap and water if exposed to seawater or raw seafood and their residues.
- Keep raw oysters and seafood separately from cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Store raw oysters and seafood at 41°F or colder.

Sharing Economy – Sharing Kitchen Spaces

If you've thought about operating a food business like catering or selling food at a temporary event and don't have the means to build or buy a fixed location, a Shared Food Facility might be a great option for you! There are currently two types of facilities that may be approved for a shared food facility:

- An "incubator kitchen" which is fully equipped with cold and dry storage, prep and packaging areas, and commercial equipment and is designed for use by multiple food operators.
- A retail and/or wholesale permanent food facility which is designed to support one food operation but due to limited business hours may be interested in leasing out their kitchen to a food operator when not in use.

There is an application process to obtain approval to operate as a Shared Food Facility. Once all the paperwork is submitted with payment, a review will occur within 20 days. When approved, you would come to our office to pay for your health permit. You cannot begin operation until you have obtained your health permit. If you do plan to operate at a community event, you will need to apply for a separate food booth vendor permit.

To find out more about Shared Food Facilities, visit <http://www.ocfoodinfo.com>.

EXCESS FOOD DONATION SAVES MONEY!

New state laws have taken effect requiring a 50% reduction in organic waste destined for landfills, which includes food waste. Not only does the donation of excess edible food to a non-profit food organization through the Waste Not OC program allow operators to do so safely and with protection from liability, donating food helps save money. By tracking both food waste and donated edible food, operators including large restaurant chains, independent operators, retail grocery stores, school districts, caterers and hotels have all been able to reduce their food waste through adjustments in their production levels and purchasing procedures.

"The program is working well. The pickups are on time and communication has been really good. Since we started tracking our excess food as part of the Waste Not OC program, we were able to see an area where we could reduce our food production which saves us money."

- Jeremy Fox, Sous Chef at The Summit House in Fullerton

Operational adjustments, along with available tax deductions for the charitable donation of excess edible food, combined with the recognition that comes with the Waste Not OC window decal identifying the donor as a community partner, are all benefits to an operator's bottom line.

Please visit ocfoodinfo.com for guidelines and contact Waste Not OC to begin your own food donation program.

Visit WasteNotOC.Org to learn more on how you can begin donating your excess food.

