DATE: February 12, 2001

TO: All Local Health Departments
     Attn.: Health Officer/Director of Environmental Health/Chief Sanitarian

FROM: Thomas Crook, Food Service Specialist
       Food Service Sanitation Section
       Food and Dairy Division

SUBJECT: Date Marking

Section 3-501.17 (C) of the 1999 Food Code requires refrigerated ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods prepared and packaged by a food processing plant to be clearly marked at the time the original container is opened to indicate the date by which the food shall be consumed. Foods held at 41°F or less, for example, must be either consumed or discarded within seven days.

Food service establishment operators typically purchase commercially processed food in bulk form. Some operators easily use the product within the time allotted, while others are having difficulty. Salad dressings and cheese are two food items that have been brought to our attention that are posing problems for a segment of the industry. Salad dressing labels typically advise refrigeration after opening. The labels fall short of advising whether or not refrigeration is necessary for food safety or only for food quality. Without this information there is a danger of requiring the operator to throw away good food.

**Salad Dressing**

I have contacted several major suppliers of salad dressings to determine if their dressings are potentially hazardous. All of the following suppliers have provided documentation to verify that all of their dressings have a pH well below 4.6, and are therefore, not potentially hazardous, and are not subject to the date marking requirements.
Ventura Foods - Manufacturers all dressings for Sysco and Gordon Food Service. (The attached list references Gordon Food Service brands, but Ventura Foods also produces the exact same product under the Sysco brand).

Litehouse – Manufactures all dressings for the following brands:
- Litehouse, Inc.
- Chadalee Farms
- Harvest Farms
- Pocahontas
- Bosco Foods
- Golbon
- Popoff Meats
- Frosty Acres
- Nugget
- Clark
- Clark Food Service
- EMD
- Caramango Foods
- Roselli’s
- Zukin Foods
- Tubby’s
- Sam’s Joint Rest. – BBQ
- Schelde’s Rest. – BBQ
- Finley’s – BBQ
- City Kids – BBQ
- Big Moe’s BBQ
- Steve’s Soul Food – BBQ
- Eddie O’Flynn – BBQ
- Shield’s BBQ

Big Boy Restaurant & Bakery

Dressings & Batters; Non-Potentially Hazardous in the Commercially Prepared Form (8/97) – The attached is a list originated by MDPH in the early 1980s. Although MDA no longer maintains the list, the information is considered reliable.

Cheese

The FDA has prepared a recommendation for the “Date Marking of Cheese”. Attached is a copy for your reference.

NSF Standard 75

The industry may submit products for testing to determine if a food is potentially hazardous under the new NSF standard 75. Visit the NSF web site for more information at www.nsf.org.

TEC:khg
Attachments