

Extension Food Safety 2012

¹ ServSafe® Food Safety Education Program Nutrition, Food Safety and Health



The Situation

A K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Science Program Survey of 2,065 Kansas citizens showed:

- 83.4% indicated that handling food safely at home was important.
- 76% identified preserving food safely at home as important.
- 74.1% of the respondents stated that keeping food safe when eating out (in restaurants) was important.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2011 estimates that in the U.S. roughly one in six Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die of foodborne illness each year.

What We Did

K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) professionals in partnership with the Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality Association (KRHA) provided food safety training to foodservice outlets and community organizations in Kansas.

The ServSafe Food Safety Education program is a nationally recognized certification program. This training program targets foodservice managers, entry-level food handlers, community organizations and groups who provide food to the public. In 2012, our efforts resulted in over 290 contact hours of food safety education. Fourteen percent of the participants in the ServSafe Food Handler classes self-reported being Hispanic, Black/African American, or other minority group.

FCS extension educators help deliver a wide variety of consumer, food handler and food service manager food safety education programs.

Whether instructing a restaurant owner, line cook or church dinner volunteer, FCS provides training and tools focusing on risk factors known to be the most important when it comes to preventing foodborne illness.

²Reducing foodborne illness by 10% would keep 5 million Americans from getting sick each year.

Outcomes

Food safety education is widely believed to be essential to the prevention of foodborne illness in the U.S. It is difficult to place an economic value on educational efforts simply because the purpose is prevention and it is nearly impossible to estimate how many cases of illness were prevented through educational efforts.

In 2012, ServSafe Food Safety Manager Classes reached over 433 foodservice workers statewide. These classes resulted in 394 foodservice employees receiving Food Safety Certification. In 2012, 708 participants completed the ServSafe Starter Food Handler class. Participants indicated that they had increased knowledge and skills of best food safety practices. Over 91.5% of the participants indicated they plan to use what they learned at work and/or at home. Participants reported they intend to wash their hands, check food temperatures and use food thermometers more often, and to be more cautious of cross contamination and food left out at room temperature.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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This educational effort also resulted in 202 Kansas food operations, volunteer/community organizations, schools, nursing homes, assisted living facilities or day care centers having staff that are food safety trained.

K-State Extension also provides research based information to citizens via the Food Safety website. In 2012, the website had 3,572 visitors. The most popular page was the Food Safety ServSafe site. www.ksre.ksu.edu/FoodSafety/p.aspx?tabid=16 The second most popular page was Food Safety for Boomers and Beyond. www.ksre.ksu.edu/FoodSafety/p.aspx?tabid=52

Public Value:

The public value of food safety education and training programs is that Kansans are provided a safer dining environment, as well as the potential for fewer hospitalizations, reduced medical costs, fewer days of work missed due to illness, and increased productivity.

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²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Food Safety, www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/

Success Story

A food service business owner contacted an extension agent in southwest Kansas to provide food safety education to his employees. K-State Extension, by having ServSafe certified and registered instructors, was able to respond quickly and provide training for the employees and proctor the ServSafe Manager Certification. This resulted in the operation being able to re-open for business sooner. Employees indicated they learned new skills such as how to control time and temperature abuse, prevent cross contamination, how to better clean and sanitize food surfaces, how to properly wash your hands, and other important personal hygiene practices.

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