

CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE	
BROAD SUBJECT: SANITATION AND SAFETY	NO: SS-06-01
TITLE: Sample Trays	EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2005 Revised June 5, 2009

PURPOSE OF THIS CRITERIA/PROCEDURE -

Although there are common contacts throughout the day in an institutional setting that may cause illness, food is often first suspected when children become ill at school. To confirm or eliminate foods from being suspect, it is often necessary for an environmental health agency to test samples of foods for food-borne illness pathogens or chemicals. Having a “sample” tray for testing purposes can expedite this process.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS -

Food-borne Illness: Illness acquired as the result of consumption of contaminated foods - commonly and incorrectly referred to as “food poisoning.” Food-borne illness may be caused by bacteria, toxic products of bacteria, viruses, parasites, chemicals, or possibly by poisons naturally occurring in some animals and plants.

Sample Tray: A daily collection of food that is representative of all food items served at school - also known as ‘dummy’ tray. This collection is then placed in a refrigerated unit in case an event occurs in which food must be tested for foodborne illness. In lieu of a tray, the school may elect to save one serving of food items in enclosed disposable containers with name of menu item, meal, time of collection and date marked with a label, grease pencil, or permanent marker. Disposable containers facilitate destruction once you’ve maintained them for the required period of time.

CRITERIA AND/OR PROCEDURES -

1. Using a sanitized utensil, collect daily one serving size of each prepared food served during a meal.
2. Place each serving on a tray, plate, or in individual sealed containers so liquids do not mix; cover the tray, plate, or containers securely; and mark the name of menu item, meal, time of collection and date marked with a label, grease pencil, or permanent marker.
3. Place the covered tray, plate, or sealed containers in a designated area of a refrigeration unit. DO NOT FREEZE. Maintain ambient temperature of the refrigeration unit at $\leq 38^{\circ}\text{F}$ so all food will be maintained at $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$.
4. Keep collected foods for seven days. For example, a tray, plate, or sealed container dated and placed in the refrigeration unit on Monday will be removed the next Monday.
5. See the attached Questions and Answers for additional information.

AUTHORITY – FEDERAL

Chapter 7, Code of Federal Regulation Parts 210.9(b)(14), 210.13(a)&(c), 210.19(e).

AUTHORITY – STATE

Georgia Department of Human Resources Rule 290-5-14-.10 Compliance Procedures.

Questions and Answers Criteria and Procedure No. SS-06-01 “Sample” Trays

Q. 1. What is a “sample tray”?

A. A daily collection of food that is representative of all food items served at school - also known as a ‘dummy’ tray. This collection is then placed in a refrigerated unit in case an event occurs in which food must be tested for food-borne illness. In lieu of a tray, the school may elect to save one serving of food items in enclosed disposable containers with name of menu item, meal, time of collection and date marked with a label, grease pencil, or permanent marker.

Q. 2. Do I have to keep food on an actual tray?

A. No, servings of food when collected may be placed on a compartment or other tray, plate or disposable container and covered for refrigeration. Disposable containers facilitate destruction once you’ve maintained them for the required period of time.

Q. 3. What about foods served by entities other than the school nutrition program?

A. Although this procedure only addresses food sold or served by the school’s nutrition program, all food is subject to contamination and this must be considered when food is selected for fundraising or allowed to be brought into the school. Your local wellness policy may address this issue.

Q. 4. Why is it necessary to collect foods and keep a “sample tray”?

A. Maintaining a “sample tray” is advantageous to the School Nutrition Program. Although there are numerous common contacts throughout the day in an institutional setting, food is often the first thing suspected when children become ill. Having a “sample tray” for testing purposes can expedite the process of disproving foodborne illness and reduce potentially detrimental press coverage.

Q. 5. Why should samples be kept refrigerated rather than frozen?

A. Freezing kills or reduces the number of some bacteria.

Q. 6. Which foods should be included in a “sample tray”?

A. It is only necessary to collect foods that are opened and/or prepared on-site. There is no need to collect whole, uncut fruits and individually packaged items that are unwrapped only by the one who eats the food. Traceability of these foods is the responsibility of the producer or manufacturer and should be considered when writing product specifications. When food is prepared on-site, keep a sample of the finished item. For example, when cooking ground beef to make spaghetti, it is only necessary to keep a sample of the spaghetti - not a sample of the cooked ground beef.

- Q. 7. How can we keep samples of every batch and every product we prepare each day when we have so many choices?**
- A.** It is only to your advantage to maintain a “sample tray.” For convenience, schedule a routine time during the meal service, e.g., toward the end of the meal service or just after foods are displayed for service. This will ensure that food is collected each day and not forgotten. Also, storage of food in disposable containers will facilitate destruction once you’ve maintained them for the required period of time.
- Q. 8. Why is a sample tray kept for seven days?**
- A.** Seven days have been determined necessary due to the common incubation times of the most prevalent food-borne illness causing bacteria.