Alberta Health Services

# Guidelines for the Preparation of Sushi Products

## INTRODUCTION

Sushi and sashimi, while delicious and aesthetically pleasing, must be handled with care to prevent foodborne illness. The health risks associated with sushi products arise from traditional preparation methods for the two main ingredients: raw seafood products, and acidified sushi rice. Raw seafood products sometimes contain the infective form of parasites such as *Anisakinae* and *Diphyllobothrium*. Acidified sushi rice is traditionally held at temperatures that promote the growth of foodborne illness bacteria, such as *Bacillus cereus*. The following guidelines are intended to reduce these particular risks.

## HANDLING OF SEAFOOD PRODUCTS TO BE SERVED RAW

1. Obtain seafood products only from reputable, approved sources.
2. At some point prior to service, seafood products to be served raw must be frozen below –20°C for 7 days, or below –35°C for 15 hours, to destroy parasites that might be present unless:
   - The fish was aquaculture-raised and fed formulated feed that contained no live parasites infective to the fish, OR
   - The product is confirmed as tuna of the species Yellowfin, Bluefin or Bigeye, AND
   - The operator has written confirmation from the supplier showing that the fish was either one of these species, was adequately frozen, or if aquaculture-raised, was confirmed as “sushi-grade” and tapeworm free.
3. Avoid cross contamination between raw and cooked ingredients:
   - food handlers must wash hands after handling raw seafood products.
   - bamboo mats used for sushi preparation should be wrapped in food grade plastic wrap which should be replaced every 2 hours and each time there is contact with a different species of raw fish.
   - other surfaces that come into contact with raw seafood or raw fish must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized prior to the preparation of other foods on that surface.

## *PREPARATION OF ACIDIFIED SUSHI RICE*

1. A written recipe for sushi rice must be drafted and consistently followed. The recipe must include the amount of rice and water in each batch prior to cooking, as well as the amount (and brand name) of vinegar/acidification agent added to this uniform amount of rice.
2. The cooked rice must be kept hot (above 60°C) prior to addition of vinegar.
3. When mixing in the vinegar, the cooked rice should be placed in shallow containers (i.e. less than 4 inches/10 cm depth, such as a plastic bus pan), rather than deep containers (e.g. rice cooker), to promote cooling and uniform acidification of the rice.
4. The pH (acidity) of the sushi rice must be below 4.6, or the rice must be refrigerated at all times after cooking. Your Environmental Health Officer can make arrangements to test the pH of the sushi rice. Ideally, a calibrated pH meter should be available in your premises and used to ensure that this acidity requirement is consistently met.

**References**


1. Chin J (Ed.) (2000). Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. Washington DC: American Public Health Association.
2. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services (2002). Guidelines for Preparation of Sushi Products. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.



***For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.***

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4EPHF-11-044
Created: Feb/04
Revised: Nov/11