



The University of Hong Kong

SAFETY MATTERS

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To: Internal Vice-President (for President, HKUSU)
Hall Wardens & Masters
Director of CPAO
Director of DAAO
Dean of Student Affairs, CEDARS
All Faculty Secretaries
(Also posted in the Intranet)

Ref.: Food Hygiene & Safety (Pun Choi)

'Pun Choi' has gained much popularity in recent years. In many mass gatherings, 'Pun Choi' becomes a trendy alternative to the conventional dishes.

The outbreak of food poisoning arising from 'Pun Choi' has been alarming in the past few years and hit the press. In February 2005, 16 persons were reported to have been affected and one person was hospitalised. Legal action was taken against at least one 'Pun Choi' caterer for breaching food hygiene law. In 2006, during the Lunar New Year period, 79 persons were affected.

Activity organizers many wish to first understand the limitations of 'Pun Choi' and its potential for food poisoning before making their plan and decision.

'Pun Choi' is cooked hours or may be even days in advance and only consumed at a later time when it is being kept warmed over a gentle fire. The large volume of food items piled in the 'Pun' may not be able to render re-heating complete and thorough. The 'Pun Choi' should be stored after cooking at a temperature either below 4°C or above 60°C before consumption. The size of the 'Pun' does not facilitate storage in an economic and safe manner in large numbers. Re-cooking prior to consumption is not normally carried out. The physical, environmental and hygiene conditions under which the 'Pun Choi' is processed, cooked, stored and delivered obviously will dictate the ultimate risk of the 'Pun Choi'. Sea food if present is particularly vulnerable to contamination due to mishandling. The capability and ability of the 'Pun Choi' caterer in handling a sudden sizeable order should be critically assessed on site. Orders exceeding the caterer's normal production capacity may be accomplished at the expense of food safety. The later the 'Pun Choi' is consumed after cooking, the higher is the risk. The facilities to store and deliver the 'Pun Choi' at the correct temperature range should warrant the attention and concern of the activity organizers.

The Food & Environmental Hygiene Department has produced some tips for 'Pun Choi' in its Homepage www.fehd.gov.hk under the Safe Food & Public Health's heading.

Staff and students are welcome to contact the Safety Office for advice if necessary.

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