

# Gloucester City Council

## *Environmental Health Factsheet*

### HOW TO COOK RICE SAFELY

#### Notes for Restaurants and Takeaways

##### IS THERE A PROBLEM?

**YES!** - Bacteria<sup>1</sup> which can produce a toxin<sup>3</sup> are often found in uncooked rice in the form of spores<sup>2</sup>. Spores are also found in other cereals, spices and soil.

- The toxin causes illness in people who eat rice which has not been very carefully prepared. The illness is mostly stomach pain accompanied by either vomiting or diarrhoea.
- Great care needs to be taken when cooking, cooling and storing rice. You should follow the rules set out in this **GUIDANCE NOTE** to prevent the risk of your customers suffering from this form of **FOOD POISONING**<sup>4</sup>.
- Problems occur because **SPORES ARE NOT KILLED** when rice is boiled. As the rice cools the spores can germinate and increase in number producing a toxin.
- The spores and the toxins cannot be seen, smelt or tasted. **THE TOXIN IS NOT DESTROYED** by frying or by boiling again. It cannot be washed away.

##### HOW CAN THIS PROBLEM BE AVOIDED

By **ALWAYS** following these simple rules -

- **NEVER** cook more rice than you can use each day.
- When rice is cooked but not served immediately **KEEP IT HOT** (above 63°C) until it is served - **OR** - **COOL IT QUICKLY** and **KEEP IT REFRIGERATED** (between 0 and 5 °C).

These temperatures can be monitored using a suitable thermometer<sup>5</sup>.



#### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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## KEY WORDS

- (1) **Bacteria** - *microscopic living cells some of which cause disease*
- (2) **Spore** - *a hard case which protects certain bacteria from adverse conditions. It enables them to be resistant to heat, drying and disinfectants. Bacteria come out of the spores (germinate) when conditions are favourable*
- (3) **Toxin** - *a poison produced by some bacteria which can cause illness*
- (4) **Food poisoning** - *caused by eating food contaminated by, amongst other things, bacteria*
- (5) **Thermometer** - *a probe type thermometer should be used to check food temperatures. The probe should be cleaned before and after use with a food safe sanitiser*

## KEEPING RICE HOT

- Rice which has been boiled and is kept **HOT** for serving must be held at a temperature of at least 63°C until it is used.
- If this temperature cannot be achieved (or if you do not know the temperature of the rice) then this rice must be thrown away after **2 HOURS**.

## COOLING RICE

- Transfer the rice from the pan or rice cooker to shallow containers. Cool the containers of rice in a clean, well-ventilated room for not more than **ONE AND A HALF HOURS**. Then put the containers into a refrigerator. **ALTERNATIVELY, THE RICE MAY BE COOLED UNDER COLD RUNNING WATER.**
- Bacteria grow quickly while rice is **WARM**. This is why rapid cooling is essential.

## RE-HEATING RICE

- When you need to use the rice, take only as much as you need from the container in the refrigerator. **DO NOT** take the container from the refrigerator and leave it in the warm kitchen.
- If the previously-cooked rice is to be used as **Boiled Rice** add a little water and **MAKE SURE** that the rice is **BOILED** again before serving.

## FRYING RICE

- Take only as much rice as you need from the container in the refrigerator.
- Egg which is to be used to make **Fried Rice** should be freshly beaten in a clean container immediately before frying.
- Cooked rice must **NEVER** be stored in a warm kitchen **UNLESS** it is being kept **HOT** (above 63°C).

## AT THE END OF EACH DAY

- **THROW AWAY** any boiled rice, fried rice or beaten egg which is left in your kitchen.
- If rice has been correctly cooled and refrigerated, it may be kept for up to 24 hours.

## GENERAL

- Rooms used for storing, preparing, cooking and serving food must **ALWAYS** be kept clean.
- **RAW** and **COOKED** foods must be kept separate. If both are stored in the same refrigerator the cooked food should be in clean, covered containers placed on shelves **ABOVE** the raw food.
- Refrigerator temperatures should be checked daily and noted in a book. Refrigerators should operate at a temperature of 0 to 5°C.
- Worktops, chopping boards and utensils used for raw food **MUST** be washed thoroughly and disinfected<sup>6</sup> before being used for cooked food. A suitable food-safe sanitiser will clean and disinfect. Separate chopping boards and utensils should be used for raw and cooked foods if possible.

## KEY WORD

(<sup>6</sup>) **Disinfected** - *reducing the number of bacteria to a safe level*

**PLEASE NOTE:** The City Council's Translation and Interpreting Service can be contacted on Gloucester 396909. An interpreter can accompany officers on visits if this is helpful. If you would like information concerning Hygiene courses please ask for Fact sheet EHF17.