

Business Advisory Sheet 9

The Storage and Cooking Of Rice

The Risk Involved

Some foods, including uncooked rice can be contaminated by the spores of a harmful bacterium, *Bacillus cereus*, which can cause food poisoning. The spores can survive normal cooking and if the food is not cooled quickly and refrigerated, rapid growth and toxin production will occur. One of the toxins produced is a very heat resistant and therefore even thorough re-heating of the rice will be of little value and food poisoning will result when someone eats the rice.

Control Measures

- Always store the uncooked rice in suitable, lidded, pest-proof containers.
- Always clean up spillages, to prevent attracting pests.
- Thoroughly wash the rice in cold water before use to remove husks, starch and other contaminants.
- Wherever possible, cook the rice fresh when needed and serve hot.
- If the rice is to be cooked in advance, do not cook too much at one time as large amounts take too long to cool and that allows food poisoning bacteria to multiply.
- Rice which is not used immediately should be cooled to room temperature as quickly as possible. This should never take longer than one and a half hours and should preferably be much quicker. This can be achieved by cooking smaller amounts, spreading the cooked rice out into clean metal or plastic flat dishes which increases the surface area, rinsing in running cold water or using a fan or in larger establishments perhaps a blast chiller facility.
- Remember not to contaminate the rice whilst it is cooking e.g. by touching, coughing, sneezing nearby or using dirty utensils, cloths or equipment.
- Once cooled to room temperature, cover the rice and store in the refrigerator.
- Remember spices can also be a source of contamination. Use reputable suppliers of spices and where possible add the spices using clean utensils/hands.

Reheating

- Only take enough rice portions from fridge as are required.
- Transfer the rice to a large pan of simmering water or bain-marie and thoroughly re-heat all the way through. (Remember to top up the water as necessary).
- If the rice is to be microwaved, ensure that the cooking time is sufficient for the portion size. (Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully).

The Storage and Cooking of Rice (continued)

- If at the busiest times larger amounts of cooked rice are to be transferred to a bain-marie for reheating, you must ensure that a minimum temperature of 75°C can be maintained all of the time. You will only know if this is being achieved if you use a probe thermometer and record the temperature regularly.

Contact

For further advice/information please contact:

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