
Seasonal Food Surveillance on Microbiological Quality of Buffet Food and Poon Choi

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

December 2007

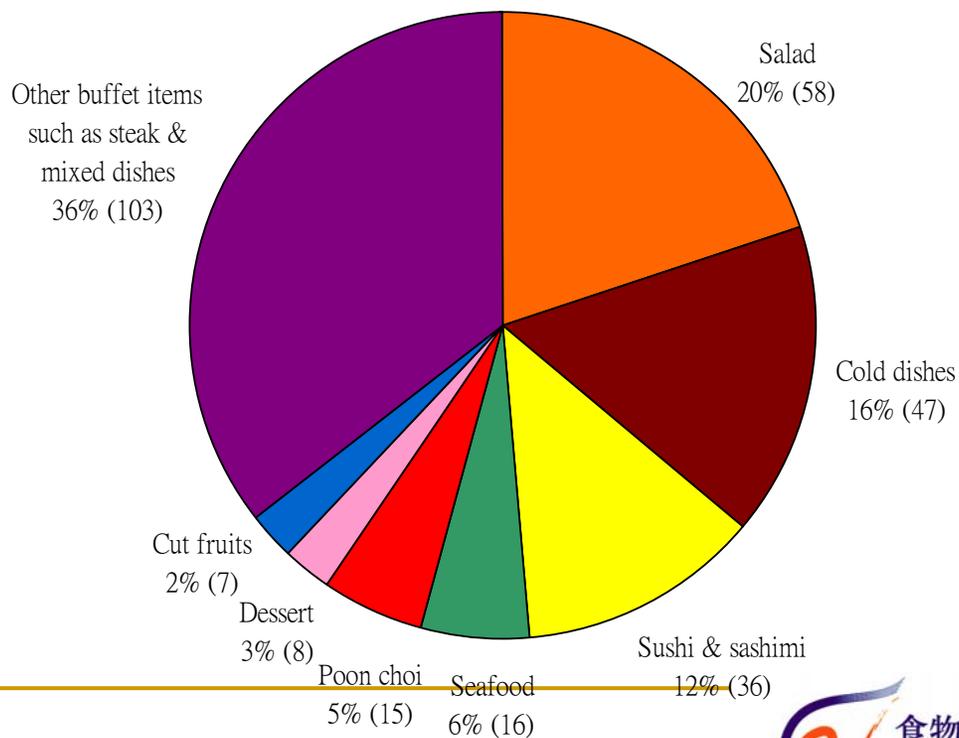
Introduction

■ Background

- Buffet food and poon choi are popular food for seasonal gatherings in December. There had been previous cases of bacterial food poisoning outbreaks associated with these food.
- Therefore, the Centre for Food Safety recently conducted a seasonal food surveillance project on buffet food and poon choi to assess their microbiological quality.

Types of food samples tested

- 290 samples were collected for microbiological tests including *Bacillus cereus*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Salmonella* spp., *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.



Overall results

- Test results of all samples were satisfactory.

Advice for food trade

- Observe good hygienic practices at all stages of food preparation.
- Keep food at appropriate temperatures (4°C or below; 60°C or above) to prevent microbiological growth.
- Separate raw food from ready-to-eat food (e.g., sashimi, cold dishes and siu mei) and use separate utensils for handling so as to prevent cross contamination.
- Buffet food:
 - Source food from reliable suppliers.
 - Avoid preparing food in excessive amounts or too far in advance.
 - Display food in small amounts and refill only when the food is almost consumed to shorten the time of display.
- Poon choi:
 - Cook all ingredients thoroughly.
 - Avoid preparing food in excessive amounts or too far in advance.
 - Cover foods properly and store raw and cooked foods separately.
 - Keep poon choi at 60°C above or 4°C below during storage and transport, and deliver to destination as soon as possible.

Advice for consumers

- Buffet food:
 - Patronize licensed and reliable restaurants.
 - Pay attention to the freshness of food and do not consume food that looks or tastes abnormal.
 - The elderly, children, pregnant women and people with lower immunity should avoid eating high-risk food like raw seafood or cold dishes.

- Poon choi:
 - Order poon choi from licensed and reliable supplier.
 - Consume as soon as possible. Do not keep it under room temperature for more than 2 hours.
 - Reheat thoroughly before consumption.
 - If there is abnormal taste or smell, stop consumption immediately.

- Maintain a balanced diet to minimize risk and to avoid eating too much food with high energy, sugar, fat and/ or cholesterol.