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# Targeted Food Surveillance on Microbiological Quality of Chinese Cold Dishes

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Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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# Background

- Chinese cold dishes are common dishes that served in local restaurant.
- Preparation of these food often involve direct manual handling and they are usually prepared in advance. In many times, cold dishes are found stored for a period of time before serving without reheating. All these factors may affect the hygiene of the food.
- In view of this, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) conducted a targeted food surveillance to assess the microbiological quality of various types of Chinese cold dishes.



# Types of tests

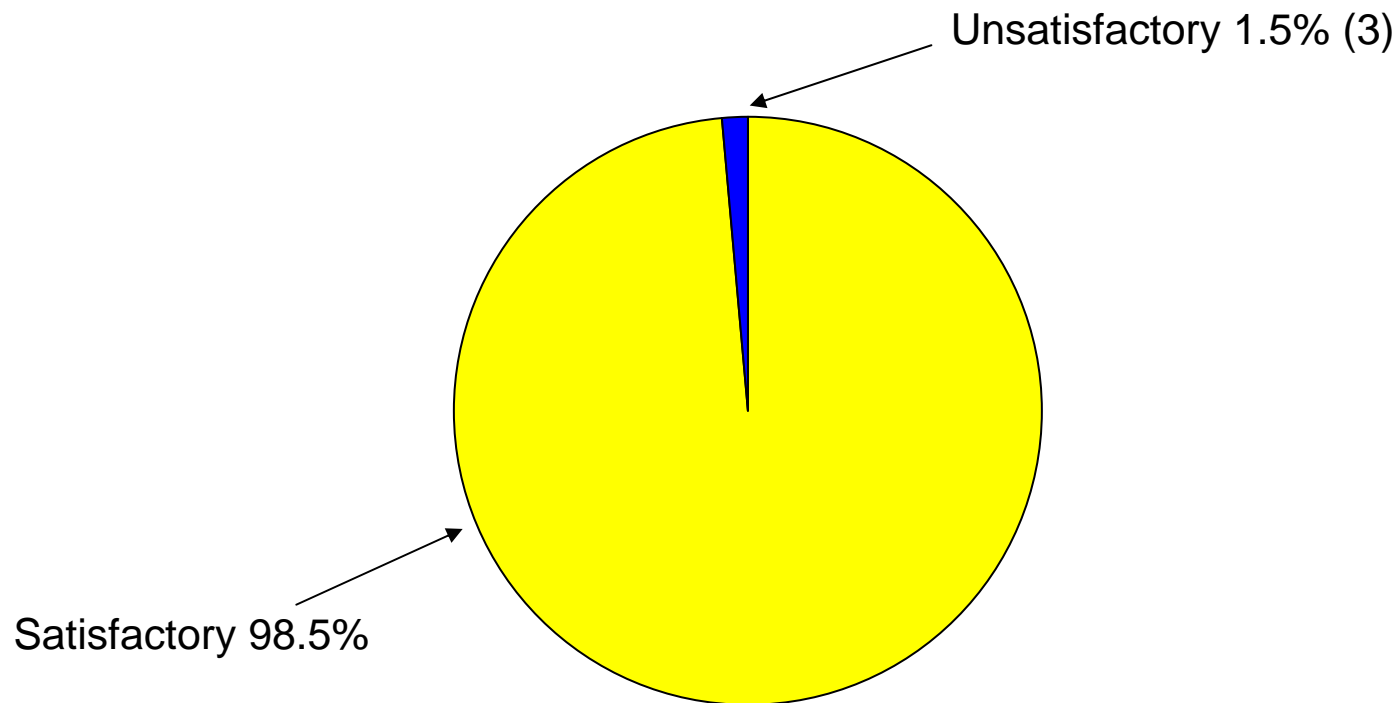
- The CFS collected 200 samples from different locations including food premises, food factories, supermarkets and convenient stores for testing pathogens (listed below) from February to March this year:

- *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*
- *Salmonella*
- *Staphylococcus aureus*
- *Clostridium perfringens*
- *Bacillus cereus*



# Overall results

- There were 3 unsatisfactory samples. Overall satisfactory rate was 98.5%.



# Unsatisfactory results

## Tests for pathogens:

- The 3 unsatisfactory samples were shown below:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
“mala” beef	<i>Salmonella</i>	Detected in 25g of food sample <sup>(1)</sup>
Spicy shredded chicken	<i>Salmonella</i>	Detected in 25g of food sample <sup>(1)</sup>
Vegetarian fine spiced duck	<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	850000 per gram <sup>(2)</sup>

- (1) Intake of food with excessive amount of *Salmonella* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.
- (2) Exceeded the guideline’s limit (less than 100000/g). *Bacillus cereus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

# Follow-up actions

- Trace source of food items in question.
- Request vendors to stop sale and dispose of incriminated food items.
- Issue warning letters to concerned vendors.
- Take follow-up samples for analysis which showed satisfactory results.

# Advice for the trade

- Estimate the demand of each dish carefully to avoid over-production.
- Plan the production schedule ahead to avoid preparing food too far in advance.
- Purchase food ingredients from reliable sources.



# Advice for the trade (Cont'd)

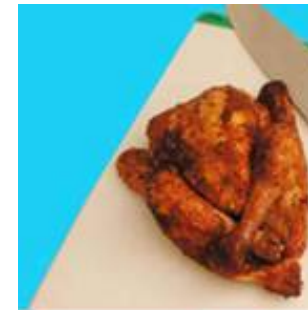
- Keep ready-to-eat dishes in covered containers and away from raw food, in the upper compartment if stored in the same refrigerator, with temperature at 4°C or below.





# Advice for the trade (Cont'd)

- Use separate utensils and to handle raw food and cooked food or ready-to-eat food in different areas.



# Advice for the trade (Cont'd)

- Food handlers should follow good personal hygiene practices, including:
  - wash hands thoroughly with running water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling foods, often during food preparation and after going to the toilet
  - wear clean and light-coloured outer clothing or protective overalls



# Advice for the trade (Cont'd)

- ❑ refrain from smoking and eating during preparation
- ❑ open wound should be covered by bright-coloured waterproof bandages or gloves
- ❑ suspend from engaging in any food handling work when suffering or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease or presenting with symptoms of flu, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, sore throat and abdominal pain

# Advice for consumers

- Patronise hygienic and reliable licensed food premises.
- Consume purchased cold dishes as soon as possible.
- If dishes are not consumed immediately, store them in a refrigerator at or below 4°C.

