
Targeted Food Surveillance on *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in Ready-to-eat Food

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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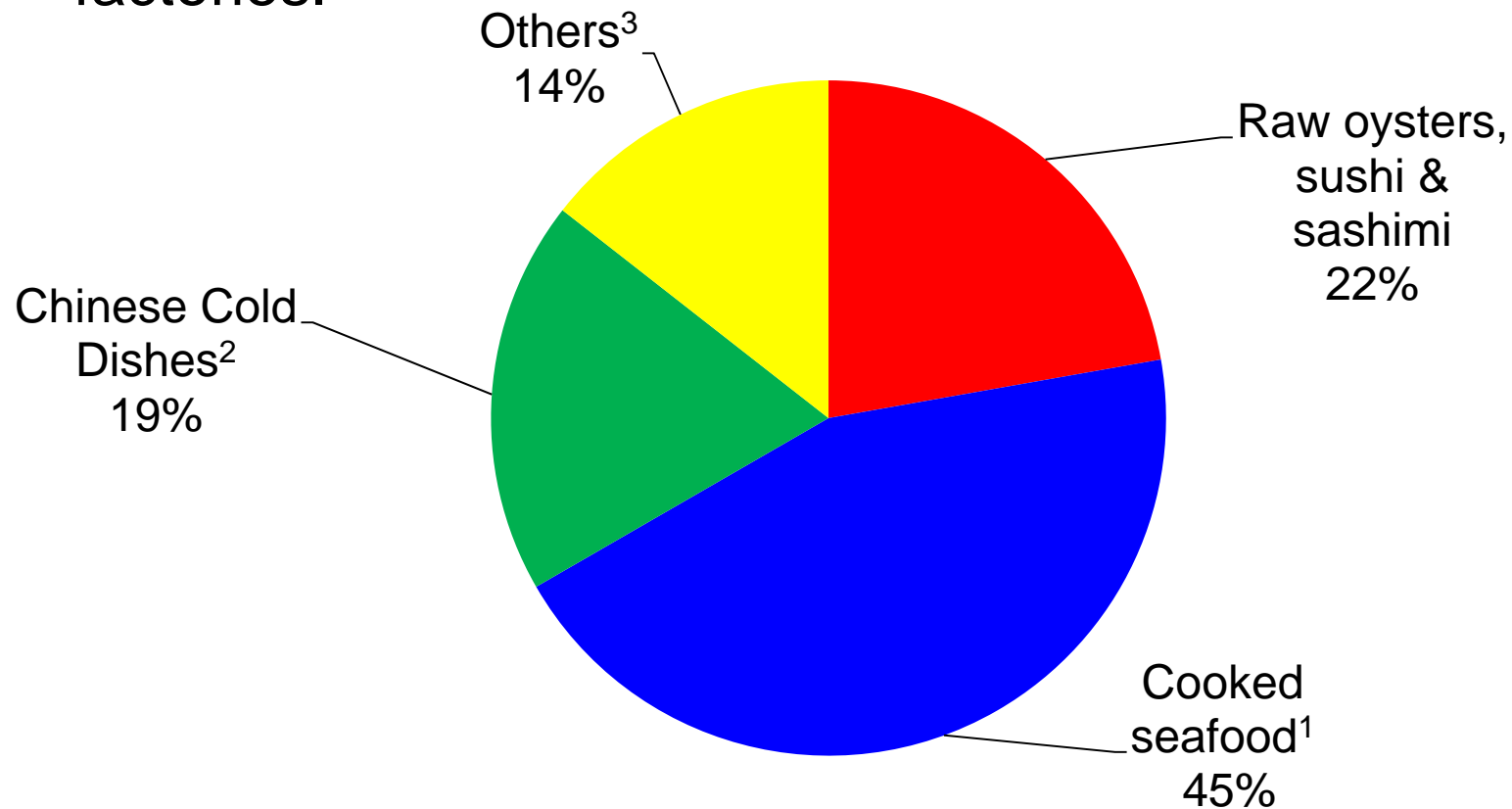


Background

- *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is a common bacterium that can cause food poisoning and is often found in the marine environment and seafood.
- Food poisoning caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* is usually associated with consumption of
 - seafood (in particular shellfish) that is raw or has not been thoroughly cooked;
 - improperly handled food that is cross contaminated with the bacteria.
- Common symptoms include diarrhoea, vomiting, mild fever and abdominal pain usually within one to two days upon consumption of contaminated food.
- Illness usually lasts few days. Severe disease is rare and occurs more commonly in the children, elderly and persons with weakened immune systems.

Types of samples

- About 900 samples were collected from over 600 different locations, including retail outlets and food factories.



■ ¹ such as fish, crustaceans & shellfish

■ ² such as jellyfish & shredded chicken

■ ³ such as siu-mei & lo-mei

■ N.B.: Figures are rounded and may not add up to total due to rounding.

Tests and results

- Samples were tested for *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* .
- All results were satisfactory.

Follow-up actions

- Although all the samples tested were satisfactory, CFS will continue publicity and education to prevent food poisoning through development, production and dissemination of publications and leaflets.
- CFS will also continue the collaboration with DH in investigation of food poisoning, and take samples of suspectedly affected food for analysis when necessary.

Advice for the trade

- Do not entertain orders beyond handling capacity.
- Proper food handling by applying 5 keys to food safety.

1. Choose Wisely

- Obtain food and food ingredients from approved and reliable sources
- Use fresh and wholesome food ingredients and check the quality of the ingredients upon receipt

2. Keep Clean

- Wash hands with soapy water before handling food, after handling raw meat or poultry and after engaging in any activities that may contaminate hands (e.g. going to the toilet, handling rubbish, handling soiled equipment or utensils, handling money, carrying out cleaning duties).

Advice for the trade

3. Separate raw and cooked food

- Ideally, use two separate refrigerators for storing raw food and cooked food or ready-to-eat food. If raw food and cooked food or ready-to-eat food have to be stored in the same refrigerator, do the following:
 - Store food in containers with lids to avoid contact between raw food and ready-to-eat food or cooked food.
 - Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood below ready-to-eat food or cooked food in the fridge to prevent juices from dripping onto ready-to-eat food or cooked food.
- Use separate utensils to handle raw food and cooked food or ready-to-eat food.

Advice for the trade

4. Cook thoroughly

- Ideally, use a food thermometer to check that the core temperature reaches at least 75°C.

5. Safe temperature

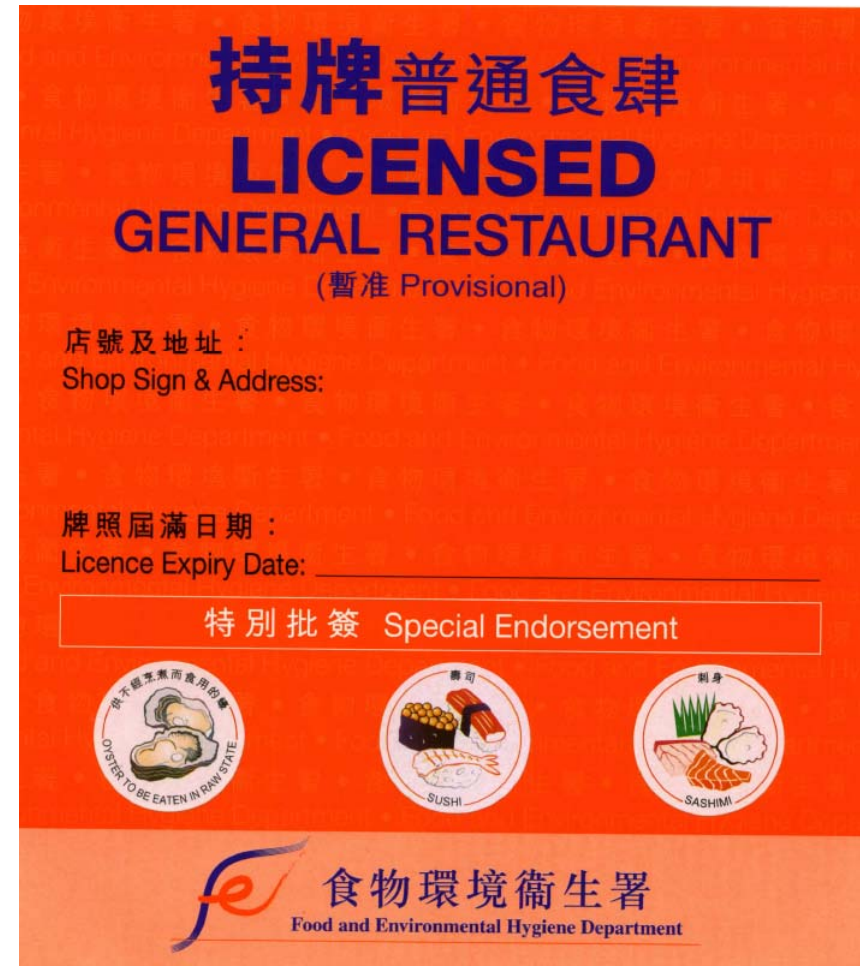
- For cold food, keep them at or below 4°C.
- For hot food, keep them at above 60°C.
- Never leave cooked food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Advice for the trade

- The following recommendations should be noted to prevent food poisoning caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* :
 - All raw oysters, sashimi and sushi sold on the premises should be kept in a refrigerator separated from other food items at a temperature between 0 °C and 4 °C.
 - To avoid cross contamination, food eaten raw should be prepared only at specified areas in food preparation room and should be separated from other food. Besides, exclusive cutting boards and knives should be used for food eaten raw. The utensils should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly before handling different types of food eaten raw.
 - Thorough cooking can significantly reduce the food poisoning risk.

Advice for consumers

- Before ordering raw oyster, sashimi and sushi in restaurants, check whether the premises have a FEHD license with the display of an orange label with the relevant endorsement stickers at a conspicuous position near the entrance. Consumers should patronize licensed & reliable premises for buying food.



Advice for consumers

- The elderly, children, pregnant women and people with lowered immunity should be careful when choosing high risk food such as food eaten raw.
- Consume ready-to-eat food as soon as possible after purchase.

