

Seasonal Food Surveillance on Mooncakes

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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Introduction

■ Background

- ❑ Mooncake is a popular food for the Mid-Autumn Festival.
- ❑ The Centre for Food Safety recently conducted a seasonal food surveillance project on mooncakes for microbiological and chemical analysis.

■ Objective

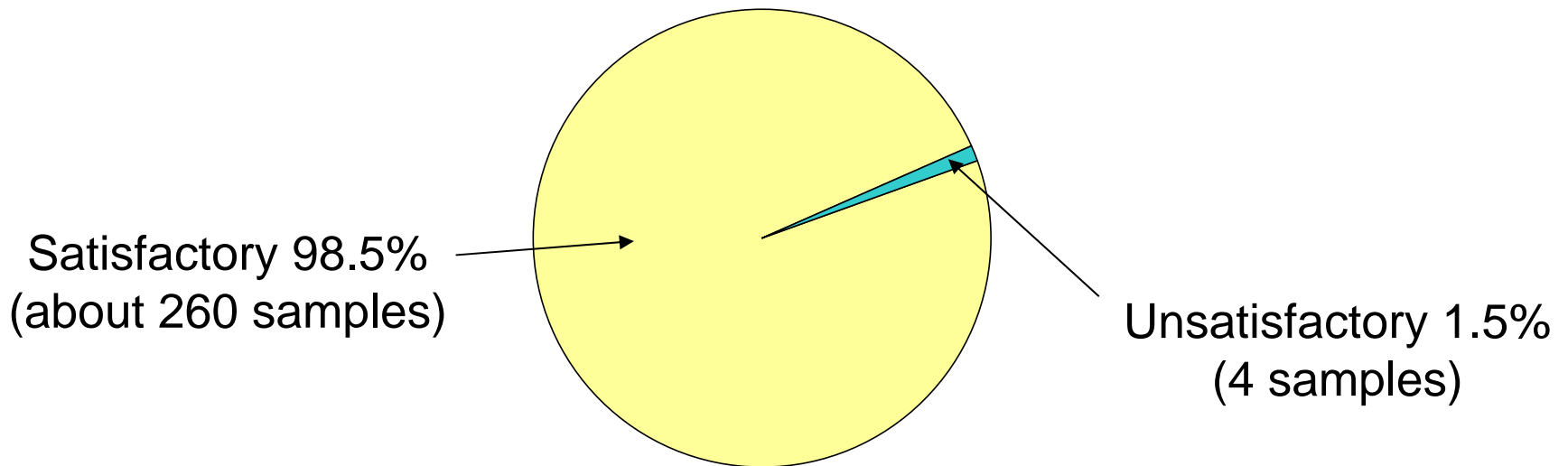
- ❑ To provide food safety information on mooncakes to consumers and the trade in a timely manner

Types of test

- About 260 samples of various types of mooncakes (traditional, snowy and ice-cream mooncakes) were collected from retailers and food factories for:
 - Chemical analysis
 - Colouring matters (e.g. Sudan dyes, tartrazine)
 - Preservatives (e.g. boric acid, sulphur dioxide, sorbic acid)
 - Sweeteners (e.g. saccharin, cyclamate)
 - Antioxidants
 - Pesticides
 - Heavy metals
 - Microbiological analysis (e.g. *Salmonella*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogenes*)

Overall result

- Overall satisfactory rate was 98.5%.



Unsatisfactory sample

- The hygienic indicators (total bacterial counts or coliform organisms) for 4 samples of ice-cream mooncake were found to exceed the legal standards.
 - Total bacterial counts: 79,000 to 120,000/g (3 samples)
 - Coliform organisms: 240/g (1 sample)
- Pathogen was not detected in the samples.
Usual consumption is unlikely to pose significant health effect.

Follow up actions

- Warning letters were issued.
- Requested concerned food premises to stop selling and dispose of the concerned products
- If there is sufficient evidence, the Centre for Food Safety will take prosecution action.

Advice for trade

- Food manufacturers should purchase food ingredients from reliable suppliers.
- The trade should adhere to the "good manufacturing practice" (GMP) for manufacturing food products, and comply with the legal requirements when using food additives.
- According to the regulation, any frozen confection should not contain more than 50000 bacteria per gram or more than 100 coliform organisms per gram.
- Snowy and ice-cream mooncakes, which do not undergo baking process, are required to be handled hygienically during processing, transportation and storage. Snowy mooncakes should be kept at 4 °C or below, while ice-cream mooncakes at -18 °C or below.

Advice for consumers

- Buy mooncakes from reliable retail outlets and do not patronise illegal hawkers.
- Check the expiry dates of mooncakes and eat them within the recommended period.
- Take mooncakes, particularly snowy and ice-cream mooncakes, home immediately after purchase, and keep them in refrigerator.
- Eat mooncakes moderately as most of them are rich in sugar and fat. Maintain a balanced diet.