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

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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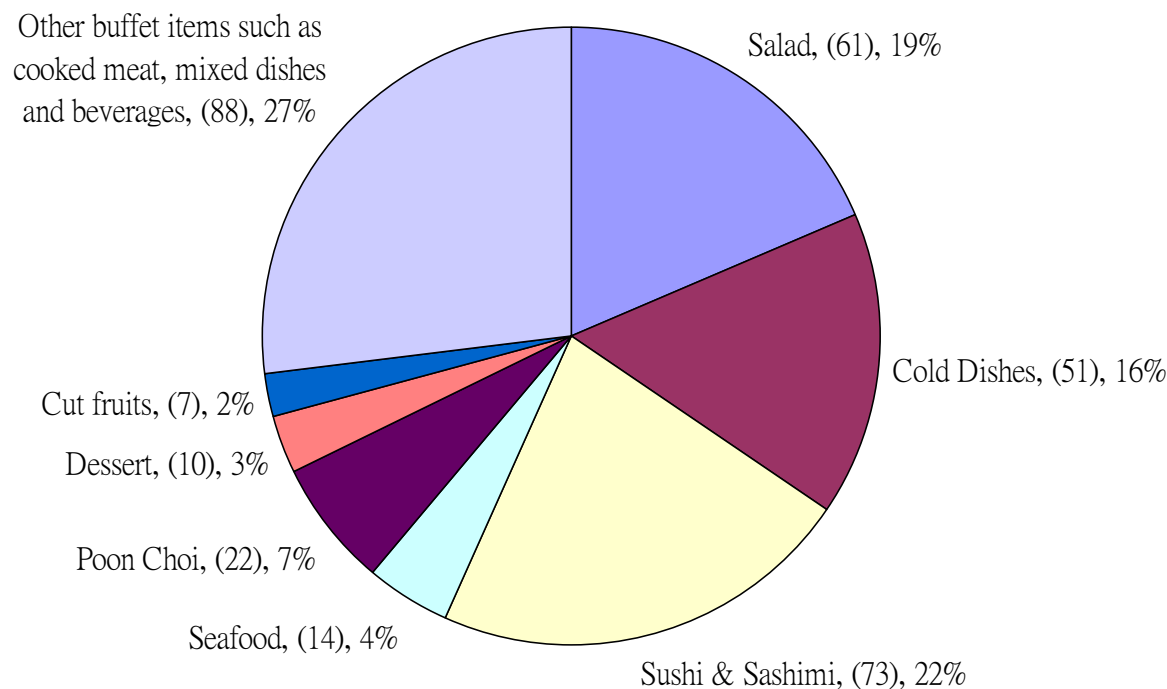
Introduction

■ 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

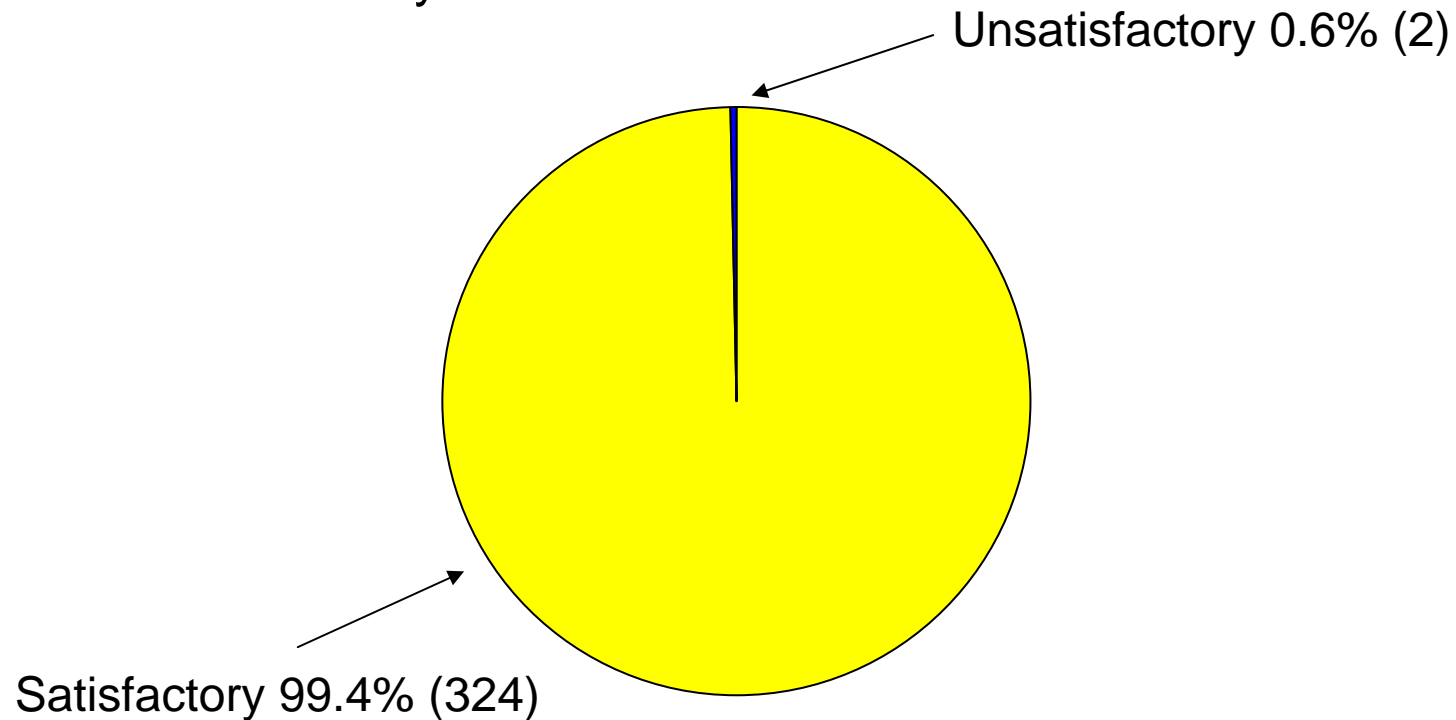
- 326 samples were collected for microbiological tests including *Bacillus cereus*, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Salmonella* spp., *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*.



N.B.: Figures in brackets are number of samples.

Overall results

- 326 samples were tested. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.4%.
- All buffet food samples were satisfactory while 2 poon choi samples were unsatisfactory.



N.B.: Figures in brackets are number of samples.

Unsatisfactory Samples

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Poon Choi	<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	$3.7 \times 10^6 / \text{g}^{(1)}$
Poon Choi	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	$8 \times 10^6 / \text{g}^{(2)}$

⁽¹⁾ & ⁽²⁾ *Bacillus cereus* and *Staphylococcus aureus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Follow up actions

- Warning letters were issued.
- Follow-up inspections & follow-up sampling were conducted.
- Advice on food hygiene was given to the vendors.
- Take prosecution actions if there is sufficient evidence.

Advice for food trade

- Observe good hygienic practices at all stages of food preparation.
- Keep food at appropriate temperatures (4°C or below; above 60°C) 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.
- 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 appropriate temperatures (4°C or below; above 60°C) during storage and transport, and deliver to destination as soon as possible
- 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.

Advice for consumers

■ 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.

■ 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.

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