

# Helpful Food Safety Hints

## Survey: Restaurant Patrons Hungry For Help At Home

(NAPSA)—Americans are craving convenience and looking to restaurants in record numbers to alleviate one facet of their busy lives. In fact, according to the National Restaurant Association, each year Americans are eating 54 billion meals at restaurants and cafeterias across the country. However, a dining experience doesn't necessarily end when a meal ends—especially when leftovers are involved. Without a basic understanding of proper food handling, each carry-out meal or doggy bag poses a potential food safety hazard.

A recent survey from the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and ConAgra Foods Foundation reveals Americans want more than just a great meal from restaurants. Seventy-five percent of diners would find it helpful if restaurants provided reheating and proper storage instructions for leftovers or take-out food.

"We have become a culture of 'diners-out' and 'takers-out,'" said Carolyn O'Neil, registered dietitian and national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety program. "But without a basic understanding of proper food handling and storage for these foods, consumers may be ordering up a case of food poisoning for dessert."

### The Guessing Game

Improper refrigeration of foods or relying on smell to judge food spoilage is a recipe for disaster. Yet, according to the survey, few consumers (19 percent) use a refrigerator thermometer to regulate their food's temperature and even fewer (six percent) label restaurant leftovers to prevent spoilage. Keep in mind, food may spoil long before it looks, smells or tastes bad.

### Tasty Temps

More than half of food preparers do not know what temperature is recommended for reheating leftovers and some unnecessarily overcook them, likely affecting taste and even texture. A meat



thermometer is the only reliable way to ensure that leftovers have reached a safe temperature and taste their best. For a safe and tasty meal, always reheat leftovers to 165°F.

### Take-out Training 101

Most experts say food poisoning is typically caused by mishandled food. In an effort to help consumers dine safely and guard against foodborne illnesses, ADA and ConAgra Foods offer the following reminders when it comes to handling restaurant leftovers and take-out foods:

- Refrigerate restaurant leftovers within two hours of eating the meal; in hot weather (90°F or above) this time is reduced to one hour
- Label and date restaurant leftovers. Consume them within three to four days
- Use a refrigerator thermometer to ensure proper storage below 40°F
- Reheat restaurant leftovers to 165°F
- Use a meat thermometer to ensure proper reheating

### Simple Solutions

To help reduce foodborne illness, the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation have partnered in a national education initiative, Home Food Safety ...It's in Your Hands®. For more simple home food safety tips, visit [www.homefoodsafety.org](http://www.homefoodsafety.org), or call ADA's Consumer Nutrition Information Line at (800) 366-1655.