

Consumer Liaison Group Newsletter

5

Dec 2013

~ Visits and Meetings ~

(1) The Consumer Liaison Group (CLG) convened its second discussion meeting in the evening of 25 April at the Communication Resource Unit (CRU) of Centre for Food Safety (CFS). The meeting was under the theme of “Smart Choice: How to be a smart food shopper” and aimed to explore members’ food shopping habits. The main points of the discussion were as follows:

Determinants of choosing retail stores and food:

Factors influencing members’ choice of food and retail stores included: price, quality, freshness, authenticity and seasonality. Members were also concerned about the hygiene conditions of the store, such as cleanliness and tidiness, credibility and personal hygiene of the staff/waiters. When buying food, they would consider reputation of the store and judge the freshness of food based on their personal experiences.

Ways of handling food products with problems:

If there was something wrong with a food product, members would either take it back to the store and ask for replacement, dispose of it or inform the manufacturer. In general, members would not take any action against retail stores suspected of selling food products with problems.

Taking personal health conditions into account when making food choices:

The majority of members agreed that personal health conditions and medical advice should be taken into consideration as they made food choices. Yet few members had heard about the bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes* and were aware of its health risks to pregnant women.

(2) The third CLG meeting was held in the evening of 18 July at the CRU of CFS to collect

members’ views on the “Launching of CFS Facebook page”. The main points of the discussion were as follows:

Habits of using social networking sites: Most members were active Facebook users who spent at least 10-20 minutes a day on the site. However, they indicated that they had never visited government Facebook pages as they were unaware that those websites existed. They attributed this to inadequate publicity by the Government.

Opinions on launching the CFS Facebook Page:

Most members were interested in visiting the CFS Facebook page. They considered Food Alert, information about nutrition and hot topics in food safety the most important contents. They expected there were more pictures, less text and the information written mainly in Chinese. They suggested an article be uploaded in portions over the course of a few days if it contained too much information.

Members’ Expectation on CFS Facebook Page:

Members hoped that the CFS Facebook page could raise awareness and knowledge on food safety among the general public and increase their willingness to participate in CFS activities. As for the frequency of content update, some members suggested that it should be one new article per week.

(3) On 27 September, CLG members visited Lee Kum Kee’s factory in Tai Po Industrial Estate to learn more about the manufacturing process of sauce. Before the visit, we took the opportunity to convene the fourth CLG meeting to seek members’ views on the “New initiatives of Food Safety Charter: Reduction of fat, salt and sugar in food”. Below were the major points discussed:

Members’ dining out habits: All members who

participated at the meeting had the habit of dining out on family or social occasions and for other reasons such as lack of cooking time after work. Some of the members said they would occasionally have breakfast and lunch at the same food premises.

Choosing food with less oil, salt and sugar content when dining out: Most members occasionally or frequently chose dishes with less oil, salt and sugar content (including prepackaged beverages with less sugar). Barriers that inhibited members from making this choice included higher cost, small portion size, taste preference and the perception that those were pure marketing gimmicks instead of healthier options. Some members mentioned that their demand for food being prepared with less oil, salt and sugar was not always met because their request had not been heeded, simply ignored or there had been some misunderstanding when making orders; or the waiter could not manage multiple requests on how a dish was prepared (such as asking that the food be prepared with less salt and not be overgrilled). Moreover, some members opined that the result of using less oil and salt was hard to be quantified and observed.

Views on CFS initiative to promote reduction of oil, salt and sugar in food: Most members supported the initiative. They suggested extra training be given to chefs and publicise the initiative through websites such as OpenRice. Nevertheless, some members strongly objected to the idea of removing salt shaker and other condiment from restaurant tables. This, in their opinion, would deny consumers of their freedom of choice, increase waiters' workload and drive consumers off. Alternatively, members suggested printing labels on the salt shaker and sauce bottles

advising people to consume less salt.

~ Food Safety Day 2013 – Make a wise food choice ~

On 22 June, Food Safety Day 2013 was held under the slogan of “Make a Wise Food Choice” with a view to ensuring food safety through promoting good food-buying habits. Award Presentation Ceremony of the “Safe Food • Gourmet Paradise” Photo Competition was held on the same day. The winning photos have successfully captured the unlimited variety of high quality and delicious foods available in Hong Kong that highlight the importance of food safety as well as its international reputation as a “Gourmet Paradise”. Highlights have been uploaded onto the CFS website. (http://www.cfs.gov.hk/tc_chi/whatsnew/whatsnew_act/whatsnew_act_Food_Safety_Day_2013.html)

~ CFS Facebook Page ~

To facilitate better communication and interaction with the public, the CFS launched its Facebook page on 1 October 2013 as an additional channel to disseminate important information on food safety and health quickly and directly to the public.



<http://www.facebook.com/CentreforFoodSafety>