



Questions About Consumer Advisories for Food Establishments Serving Raw or Undercooked Foods

What is a consumer advisory on foods?

A consumer advisory is a publicly available written statement that informs consumers that a ready-to-eat food of animal origin is raw, undercooked, or not otherwise processed to eliminate disease causing organisms, and the food therefore poses a risk. A consumer advisory consists of two distinct parts: disclosure and reminder. A consumer advisory goes on the menu or on whatever consumers read to make their food selections.

What is the intent of a consumer advisory?

The intent of the consumer advisory is to assure that all consumers are informed about the increased risk of eating raw or undercooked animal foods. Informed consumers are best able to assess their individual risk and assume responsibility for their ordering decisions, based on their knowledge and understanding of the situation.

Does every food establishment need a consumer advisory?

No. Only food establishment operators who choose to serve raw or undercooked foods of animal origin are required to have a consumer advisory. Further, beef steak that is labeled as “whole muscle intact beef” where by the top and bottom surfaces are cooked to achieve a color change (145°F), does not require a consumer advisory.

Are there any facilities that are not permitted to use consumer advisories?

Yes. Food facilities that serve food to a highly susceptible population are not permitted to use a consumer advisory. Foods of animal origin cannot be served raw or undercooked in these facilities.

What definitions do food operators need to know?

Disclosure means a written identification as to which foods of animal origin:

1. Are or can be ordered raw or undercooked, or
2. Contain ingredients of animal origin that are raw or undercooked.

Reminder means a written statement concerning the health risk of consuming raw or undercooked animal foods. Publicly Available means readily accessible to con-

sumers (without consumers having to request it) before placing food orders or making selections. Menu means whatever consumers read (table tent, placard, chalkboard, or other written means) to make their selection.

What is the general format for the consumer advisory?

A consumer advisory consists of a disclosure and a reminder. The following must be included as part of the general format.

1. The language (English, Spanish, Chinese, etc) for the menu must match the language used for the disclosure and reminder. Additional languages may also be used if desired.
2. The text size must be visually equivalent to or at least 11 point font or visually equivalent to the font size of the menu item descriptions.
3. The text color must provide a clear contrast to the background.

How do I get started?

First Step—Review your menu. Determine which foods of animal origin on your menu are being served in a ready-to-eat raw or undercooked form.

Second Step—Write the disclosure on the menu. The foods identified in the first step will require a written disclosure on your menu. The disclosure can be made using one of the following methods:

1. You can describe each item to include the disclosure that the food item is, or contains, raw or undercooked animal food. Examples include “Raw oysters on the half shell”, “Raw egg Caesar Salad”, “Hamburgers can be cooked to order” or “Eggs cooked to order” (See Example A) or
2. You can place an asterisk next to the food item requiring disclosure to a footnote on the bottom of any page of the menu that can be easily located by the consumer. The footnote must indicate the asterisked items are served raw or undercooked; contain or may contain raw or undercooked ingredients; or may be requested undercooked; or can be cooked to order.

When the menu has a section of common food items that may be served raw or undercooked such as “Hamburgers”, you can provide one disclosure for the entire section such as “Our hamburgers can be cooked to order”. It is not necessary to provide a disclosure for each individual item within the section such as cheeseburgers, baconburgers, mushroom burgers, etc. (See Example B)

Third Step—Write the reminder

Finally you will need to select one of the following three types of reminders (footnote, brochure, placard) for informing the consumer of the increased risk associated with eating foods of animal origin in a raw or undercooked form.

1. Footnote:

You must place an asterisk alongside items requiring disclosure on the menu to a footnote on the bottom of any page of the menu that can be easily located by the consumer. The footnote must state one of the following reminders:

- a. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.
- b. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have a medical condition.
- c. Regarding the safety of these items, written information is available upon request. (The preferred written information is the United States Food and Drug Administration’s model consumer advisory brochure available at the Allegheny County Health Department—see brochure option below.)

2. Brochure—There are two options available when using a brochure. The first option is to have the disclosed items footnoted to a reminder statement that refers the reader to a consumer advisory brochure. When the brochure is not publicly available, the above reminder statement (1c.) must be mentioned on the menu. (See Example C)

In the second option when the brochure is publicly available the reminder need not be on the menu. However, disclosure must still be on the menu.

3. Placard—The reminder may also be provided to the public on a placard, table tent or other written means using the reminder statements (a) or (b) listed above. However, disclosure must still be on the menu.

Summary

The consumer advisory is required under “Article III, Food Safety Rules and Regulations” of the Allegheny County Health Department. Operators are expected to begin using the consumer advisory as soon as reasonably possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Food Safety Program.

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List of Examples

There are several disclosure and reminder combinations that can be used. The following examples show some of the options.

Example A

Disclosure as a Description/Reminder to a Footnote:

Menu
Chef’s Salad Spinach Salad Caesar Salad (contains two raw eggs)* <i>(at bottom of page)</i>
* Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness, especially if you have a medical condition.

Example B

Disclosure and Reminder to a Footnote:

Menu
Hamburgers* Cheeseburger Olive Burger Bacon Burger Hamburger Deluxe <i>(at bottom of page)</i>
* Hamburgers are cooked to order. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.

Example C

Disclosure as a Description/Reminder to a brochure:

Menu
Oysters on the Half Shell (raw oysters)* <i>(at bottom of page)</i>
* Regarding the safety of these items, written information is available upon request.