

Extension food safety training targets unwelcome dinner guests

Even though the United States has one of the safest food supplies in the world, there are still millions of cases of food-borne illness each year. The effect on both individuals and businesses can be devastating – sickness, sometimes disability and death, business loss and bankruptcy. The USDA Economic Research Service estimates medical costs and business loss related to food-borne illness to be in the billions each year.

Iowa-based grocer Hy-Vee, Inc., understands the importance food safety plays in its stores. The grocer recently partnered with ISU Extension to provide food safety training for 85 employees at its new Fleur Drive store in Des Moines.

“Because we offer so many fresh food products in our stores, it is critical for us to be proactive about food safety,” says Matt Husman, Hy-Vee’s food safety director. “Connecting our staff with up-to-date training and information helps to keep our customers safe.”



The training session focused on food safety in six areas: improper cooking/thermometer calibration, personal hygiene, cross contamination, chemical contamination, cleaning/sanitizing, and storage. It was modeled after Extension’s professional food safety certification programs taught throughout Iowa and recognized nationally. The Hy-Vee employees learned about food hazards and appropriate food handling practices, and then rotated through interactive stations that reinforced the concepts. “The expertise of the Extension staff members and their willingness to demonstrate food safety issues made the training come alive,” says Husman. “I had veteran employees tell me it was the best food safety training they’ve ever had.”

Steve Mick, the store’s Meat Department manager, said that he plans to work with other department employees to target cross contamination. Designating stations for certain job functions will help to lower the risk, he says. He’ll also promote frequent hand-washing among staff. “The safety of our customers is my responsibility as a Hy-Vee employee. We want people to stay healthy,” he says.

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- Matt Husman, Food Safety Director, Hy-Vee, Inc.

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