

Michigan Restaurants Value Food Safety and Guest Comfort

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Advancements in technology affect all parts of our lives – from paying bills to ordering a meal from our favorite restaurant. Restaurateurs operate our favorite diners and pubs in an age when every customer is a food critic due to websites such as Zagat.com and Yelp.com. Health department restaurant reports now being available online is yet another sign of our technology-filled lives.

It's important to remember that accessing restaurant inspection reports isn't new – the information was always available to the public. Now that they are posted online, it's simply easier to access. Just like with any new information you can find quickly and easily online, it's critical that one understands exactly what information is provided in a restaurant inspection report before making judgments regarding the establishment.

Local public health departments inspect all restaurants bi-annually. Inspections are based on the Michigan Food Law and Food Code, which was last updated in 2012. During inspections, restaurants may be given violations for different levels of safety concerns. Violations are not uncommon – almost all restaurants have had a violation at some point during their history and work to resolve them as quickly as possible.

There are three types of violations restaurants may receive on an inspection report: core, priority foundation, and priority. Core violations are often general sanitation issues that, left uncorrected, could contribute to a foodborne illness. An example is a restaurant employee failing to wear a hair net. Priority foundation violations support or enable a priority violation. For example, no soap at the employee hand washing station. Finally there are priority violations – the most critical. Priority violations could result in a foodborne illness outbreak (staff not washing their hands is an example) and must be corrected with the health inspector present, if possible.

It's also important to remember that restaurant operators take food safety very seriously. Restaurateurs are, more often than not, in the hospitality industry because it's their passion. They know that people live their lives in restaurants – birthdays, anniversaries, and so many other life events are celebrated in restaurants. They want their customers to feel safe eating in their establishment. It's very personal to them.

The law requires that all licensed foodservice establishments must have at least one manager on staff that is certified through an American National Standards Institute – Conference for Food Protection (ANSI-CFP) program. The Michigan Restaurant Association (MRA) operates the ServSafe Program, which is certified by ANSI-CFP – and certified nearly 2,000 people in food safety last year. In the ServSafe training courses, participants learn the information needed to serve safe food. It makes them aware of food safety risks and how to reduce or eliminate them – which, in turn, keeps customers safe.

As an industry, we strive to provide the safest possible eating and drinking places – period. MRA members work diligently every day to provide their customers and community foodservice of the highest quality. The MRA encourages the public to thoroughly understand proper food safety protocol in order to be educated consumers and understand how carefully their local eateries work to keep them safe and healthy.