

FOOD HANDLING PRACTICES AMONG DOUBLES VEBDORS OPERATING IN THE CITY OF SAN-FERNANDO, TRINIDAD.

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Background: Street foods have become an important component of food distribution system in many cities of both industrialized and developing countries. In spite of this, a number of street foods offered for sale are often unsafe for human consumption as a result of microbial contamination or spoilage. This often poses a significant risk to consumers' health. These risks depend primarily on the nature of the food sold, conditions under which it is prepared and the manner in which it is handled before consumption.

Objective: To investigate : **(1)** the food safety risk factors associated with the sale of doubles by vendors in the city of San-Fernando **(2)** To quantify the microbial levels of the doubles and its condiments served by doubles vendors in the city of San-Fernando **(3)** To make suitable recommendations for the safe operation of doubles vendors in the city of San-Fernando.

Design: A questionnaire was administered to each vendor and the use of an observational checklist was also incorporated to investigate the various aspects of personal hygiene and food handling practices. Also, samples of channa, bara and condiments were taken to test for microbial analysis.

Results: Of the twenty six vendors, almost half of the population had their head covered (46%). (100%) wore clean clothing. Significantly only 7.7% wore gloves while handling the food. Half of the population (50%) wore jewelry. 42, 3% used their hands to pick up the bara. At the vending site, with respect to supply of clean water, the majority of the population supplied this (88.4%) Garbage bins were present for most of the vendors (88.4%). Associates were definitely found between hygienic practices and sanitation at vending sites. Among the 26 vendors, 34% served channa that was unsatisfactory after conducting microbial analysis. Also, of these vendors who served pepper sauce, 30% of the vendors served pepper sauce that was unsatisfactory for consumption.

Conclusion: Upon completion of this study, several factors were associated with the food safety which poses a risk for consumers in the City of San Fernando. These factors were, physical, environmental and microbial.