

Consumers' perceptions and awareness of safe food preparation practices at homes in Trinidad, West Indies

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Abstract

The objectives were to evaluate consumer perception and awareness of safe food preparation practices at homes. A questionnaire was self-administered to 124 consumers who were primarily responsible for preparation of foods and owned a refrigerator at home. Data were analysed by frequencies and chi-square. Most (97.6%) consumers considered safe food practices as 'very important'. Few (8.9%) related Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point to safe food preparation practices. Microbiological hazard was ranked as a most serious threat to food safety (80.5%). *Salmonella* was most well known (79.8%). Diarrhoea (23.7%) was a common symptom of food-borne illness. More than 50% would 'always' check for expiry dates on labels, seals and would never purchase swollen cans. Only 48.4% consumers used separate cutting boards for meats and vegetables 'always'. Some (6.5%) felt it was appropriate to give unfit food to someone else. The study identified critical points in safe food preparation practices for effective public health education.