

ABSTRACT

Food Handling Practices by Oyster Collectors and Vendors and the Public's
Views on Food Safety Issues in Oyster Vending in Trinidad

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Studies have shown that the consumption of raw oysters was linked to various foodborne illnesses resulting from microbial contamination and posed a threat to the safety of consumers. Raw oysters maybe contaminated at any point of the process, from the point of harvest to the point of consumption.

A cross-sectional study was designed to observe food handling practices of oyster collectors and vendors and to determine the knowledge, perception and behaviour of 362 persons of the public on food safety issues in oyster vending. Data was collected conveniently via a structured face to face interview and a checklist for the oyster collectors, a participant's observation exercise and a checklist for the oyster vendors and a questionnaire for the public. The study was analysed using descriptive statistics, chi- squared test, independent t-test, ANOVA test, linear and logistic regression.

The results indicated that oyster collectors had the highest weighted average score of severity of deficiency of 61% in site location and selection and 58% deficiency in fresh and shucked oyster storage whilst oyster vendors had about 61% in both personal hygiene and fresh and shucked oyster storage. There were significant relationships between respondents gender ($P=0.029$), age group 31-40 years ($P=0.029$), behaviour scores ($P=0.000$) and perception score

($P=0.000$) and persons who consume raw oysters. Also, there were significant relationships between perception score ($P=0.005$), behaviour score ($P=0.041$) and knowledge score ($P=0.000$) and their level of concern of persons who have tried consuming raw oysters.

It was concluded that the oyster vending industry lacked proper food safety handling practices from the point of harvest to the point of consumption. Thus, Hazard Analysis and Critical Point (HACCP) guidelines were developed for the oyster vending industry to reduce the concerns and the potential health risk to the public on food safety issues.

Keywords: Sarah Dharoo; Food Handling; Raw Oyster Vending; Knowledge;

HACCP.