

ServSafe inspires safe home and commercial food handling practices during Pandemic

The Situation

CDC estimates that each year 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die. K-State Research and Extension has been a provider of various home and commercial food safety education programs including ServSafe®, a nationally recognized training program targeted for food service managers, entry-level food handlers and community organizations. Due to COVID-19, consumers were hypersensitive about the potential spread of the virus through food and food contact surfaces. As a result of high demand, cleaning supplies became unavailable to consumers.

What We Did

Prior to the pandemic, K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) professionals provided in person ServSafe® food safety training. Per ServSafe® protocol, in person classes were canceled and online courses were only available through the National Restaurant Association.

K-State Research and Extension responded to pandemic panic by creating a curated COVID-19 and Food Safety webpage and promoted hand washing, safe shopping, and preventing food waste. <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/topics/covid19.html>.

In addition, a transdisciplinary group of KSRE Agents and Specialists formed a Local Foods team that completed several projects:

- A series of Facebook videos on a variety of food issues including food preservation and shopping at Farmers Markets.
- Six COVID-19 focused posters for food safety and county fairs.
- Ten infographics on COVID-19 and food safety for social media.
- Seven infographics for September Food Safety Education month.
- Three webinars for restaurants, county fair food stand guidance, and how to sell foods safely in Kansas, created in partnership with the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

Outcomes

ServSafe®

In 2020, 8 ServSafe® Food Handler classes were held with 75 participants completing the class. Post-session surveys of 62 participants indicated that they had increased knowledge and skills of best food safety practices. Of the participants completing the post survey, 84% indicated they plan to use what they learned at work and/or at home. Participants reported they intend to wash their hands, check food temperatures and use food thermometers more often, and to be more cautious of cross contamination and food left out at room temperature.

Reach of Food Safety Educational Projects via social media:

Homesteading 911 Videos

Homesteading 911: Food Preservation-Freezing – **26,299** people reached on Facebook

Homesteading 911: Food Preservation-Canning – **28,404** people reached on Facebook

Homesteading 911: Shopping at Farmers Markets – **2,213** people reached on Facebook

COVID-19 and Food Safety website--**2,599** pageviews.

Seven Facebook infographics for Food Safety Education Month in September 2020--**4,051** people reached.

As part of a North Central Region Extension Food Safety group, ten Facebook infographics were shared about safe home food preservation practices. The total reach, as of September 25, 2020, was **17,762** people.

Ten COVID-19 and food safety infographics developed for Facebook--**25,364** people reached. Samples below:



Success Story

ServSafe® comments from Wyandotte County participants:

- Food should be handled safely to keep people from getting sick. This class was very educational.
- This is an excellent training! I have learned strategies and methods to be a good food handler. Food safety is a continuous process.

Contact

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