

CFS announces results of seasonal food surveillance on rice dumplings (first phase)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (May 18) announced that the test results of about 50 rice dumpling samples collected under a recently completed seasonal food surveillance project on rice dumplings (first phase) were all satisfactory.

Rice dumplings are a popular festive food for the Tuen Ng Festival. The project aims to provide information on the safe consumption of rice dumplings to consumers and the trade in a timely manner.

"The CFS collected samples of rice dumplings from different food premises such as restaurants, food factories and other retail outlets for chemical and microbiological analyses. The chemical analyses included tests for colouring matters (such as red 2G), preservatives (such as boric acid), metallic contamination (such as lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury and copper) and pesticides. The microbiological analyses covered pathogenic bacteria including Salmonella, coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms, Clostridium perfringens and Bacillus cereus," a spokesman for the CFS said.

The spokesman reminded members of the public to observe the following food safety tips in purchasing, preparing, storing and consuming rice dumplings:

Buying rice dumplings

- * Buy rice dumplings from reliable retail outlets;
- * When purchasing non-prepackaged rice dumplings, choose those that are securely wrapped in wrapping leaves; and
- * When purchasing prepackaged rice dumplings, check the expiry date and whether the packaging is intact.

Home-made rice dumplings

- * Buy wrapping leaves from reliable suppliers and avoid leaves that are unnaturally bright green or with chemical smells; and
- * Choose healthier ingredients as fillings (e.g. dry beans, lean meat and mushrooms) by following the "3 Low 1 High" dietary principle of low fat, low sugar, low salt and high fibre.

Storing and preparing rice dumplings

- * Consume rice dumplings as soon as possible and avoid prolonged storage;
- * Store rice dumplings at 4 degrees Celsius or below, or store them properly according to the instructions on the package;

- * Keep cooked rice dumplings that are not consumed immediately in a covered container and put them in the upper compartment of the refrigerator. Keep raw food in the lower compartment to prevent cross-contamination;
- * Reheat rice dumplings thoroughly until the core temperature reaches 75 degrees Celsius or above before consumption;
- * Do not reheat leftover rice dumplings more than once; and
- * Consume reheated rice dumplings as soon as possible.

Consuming rice dumplings

- * Before eating, wash hands with running water and liquid soap and dry them with a dry towel or paper towel; and
- * Reduce seasonings such as soy sauce or granulated sugar during consumption.

The spokesman said, "Rice dumplings in general are relatively high in energy, fat and salt. During the festival, people should maintain a balanced diet, and consume rice dumplings moderately, with due consideration of their health condition. People are recommended to share rice dumplings with their family members and friends, as this not only enhances the festive atmosphere, but also allows them to taste rice dumplings of different flavours and avoid over-consumption. People are also advised to make use of nutrition labels on prepackaged food to compare their nutritional contents for healthier food choices."

He also reminded food manufacturers to purchase food ingredients from reliable suppliers, adhere to Good Manufacturing Practice for preparation of food products and comply with legal requirements when using food additives.

The CFS will continue to conduct surveillance on rice dumplings and the second phase results (including nutrition content analyses) will be released in a timely manner to ensure food safety.