

Test results on hairy crabs and oysters satisfactory

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (November 9) announced the test results of the seasonal food surveillance project on hairy crabs and oysters. All samples passed the tests.

The tests for hairy crabs included veterinary drug residues, metallic contaminants, synthetic hormones, colouring matters and pesticide residues, as well as dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected 73 hairy crab samples at the import and retail levels for chemical tests and the test results were all satisfactory."

Moreover, the CFS continues to carry out chemical and microbiological tests on oysters and related products sampled from import, wholesale, and retail levels as part of its ongoing Food Surveillance Programme. From January to October this year, the CFS collected over 500 samples of oysters and related products for chemical and microbiological testing. Apart from one earlier announced imported fresh oyster sample which was found with excessive *Escherichia coli*, the rest of the samples have met the testing standards, achieving an overall passing rate of over 99.9 per cent. As the season of oyster consumption draws near, the CFS collected 20 extra oyster samples this week, sourced locally and from the Mainland, France, Japan and other places. These samples, collected at public markets, supermarkets, fresh provision shops and other retail stores, were submitted to the Government Laboratory for running more than 70 tests on heavy metals, including antimony, cadmium, chromium, inorganic arsenic, lead, and total mercury, via accredited methods. All testing results on metallic contaminants were found to be satisfactory.

Traders should have obtained relevant permits or written permission granted by the FEHD for selling hairy crabs and oysters, and the hairy crabs and ready-to-eat oysters being sold must be accompanied with health certificates issued by the relevant authorities of the exporting economies. They should source hairy crabs and ready-to-eat oysters from reliable suppliers and comply with the relevant regulatory requirements. Moreover, hairy crabs and ready-to-eat oysters for sale must be kept in a refrigerator.

The CFS advises members of the public to observe the following Five Keys to Food Safety in purchasing, storing, preparing and cooking hairy crabs to prevent food-borne illnesses and enjoy the seasonal food safely.

Choose wisely

- Buy hairy crabs from reliable and hygienic shops with the Shell Fish (Hairy Crab) Permit or relevant written permission granted by the FEHD;
- During purchase, check whether the hairy crabs for sale are kept in a refrigerator, and buy live crabs with intact, shiny shells and without a foul

smell; and

- For online purchase, buy from reliable online shops with licenses or restricted food permits, and pay attention to the nature and potential risk associated with food items purchased online.

Keep clean

- Brush and wash the crab shells and claws before cooking; and
- Wash hands with running water and soap, and rub for at least 20 seconds before consumption.

Separate raw and cooked foods

- Put the raw crabs in a container with a cover and store them separately from other foods in the refrigerator to avoid cross-contamination.

Cook thoroughly

- Avoid eating raw crabs. Cook thoroughly and remove internal organs completely before consumption. Condiments such as salt, vinegar, wine and wasabi cannot kill bacteria or parasites that may be present in the crabs.

Safe temperature

- Cooked crabs should be consumed as soon as possible.

The spokesman also reminded that due to their specific growing nature, oysters can be easily contaminated by pathogens and chemical contaminants, and pose potential risks. Bacteria (e.g. *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Vibrio vulnificus*) and viruses (e.g. norovirus and Hepatitis A virus) may accumulate in them if they are grown in or harvested from contaminated water. Consuming oysters without thorough cooking might risk direct intake of these microorganisms. Susceptible groups, such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems or liver diseases, should avoid eating them. Although ingestion of small amounts of heavy metals from food usually does not affect health, long-term consumption of foods containing excessive amounts of heavy metals (including shellfish) may affect health. To avoid intake of excessive contaminants from small portions of food, it is important to maintain a balanced diet.