

Food Microbiology Versus Food Trends

“Is food microbiology keeping up with the pace of social media and fast paced product development?”

Jonathan Frey
Experfy
USA



COLUMN ARTICLE

Is food microbiology keeping up with the pace of social media and fast paced product development? Today trends in food and cuisine are travelling at the speed of social media, television and numerous new food outlets. One of the most popular types of photos on social media is the meal one is about to eat. These meal photos are shared from restaurants and food venues all over the world and are driving trends. Cooking and travel shows are popular both on television and the internet. Viewership of these cooking and travel shows is creating demand in restaurants for new and different menu items, new ingredients and spices. Are we evaluating the risks with new and potentially unfamiliar ingredients associated with the new trends? Are the quality assurance departments being given adequate time to reliably develop new suppliers for unfamiliar ingredients?

The barrier to entry in “restaurants” is quite low considering the popularity of food sold at festivals and food trucks. We take for granted in developed countries that the food is safe and correct procedures for safe preparation and keeping are followed. The proliferation of new venues challenges the local public health departments ability to inspect and certify new food preparation facilities. Increased movement of people from all over the world has also fueled demand for new cuisines in locations where previously no demand existed. Often these new restaurants are started by immigrants from other countries with different food handling

practices than developed countries. Communication of food safety standards across cultures and languages poses a challenge for local public health inspectors.

The ability to travel rapidly around the world entices travelers to taste local cuisines in food service establishments that may be different than one is accustomed to in their home country. A quick look at the visual appearance of a food service establishment is the primary information a potential customer uses to decide on sampling the food. What may be clean in the front of the restaurant may not correlate to the practices occurring where food is prepared or ingredients are sourced. Food handling best practices are hard to assess from the outside of a restaurant, so travelers take a risk when dining in less developed areas.

©All rights reserved by Jonathan Frey.