

# HEALTH CARE AGENCY/PUBLIC HEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

TO: Orange County Restaurant Owners and Operators

SUBJECT: Safe Preparation of BBQ Roasted Pork

Many popular dishes served in restaurants and markets are made from large pieces of meat, such as whole pigs used to make BBQ roasted pork. Due to the size of these meat products, there may be more opportunity for disease-producing germs to grow during the preparation process. The additional time necessary to prepare large pieces such as BBQ roasted pork increases the chance for the food to be in the temperature "danger zone" where disease-producing bacteria (germs) grow rapidly. The "danger zone" is a range of temperatures between 41 degrees Fahrenheit and 135 degrees Fahrenheit. To prevent a foodborne illness it is important that every stage in the preparation, cooking and the hot and cold holding of BBQ roasted pork be examined to minimize the time in the "danger zone" and to prevent its contamination by unclean equipment and utensils.

The purpose of this Informational Bulletin is to provide you with guidance on how to safely prepare, cook, and store BBQ roasted pork.

# PREPARATION:

Large portions of meat such as BBQ roasted pork must be prepared quickly, with no interruptions. This minimizes the time that the foods are in the temperature "danger zone". These foods may be prepared at room temperature for up to two hours. After two hours the food must be put back into a refrigerator or fully cooked. If the preparation process has not been completed, it may continue for up to two more hours, provided that the foods have a beginning temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below, or 135 degrees Fahrenheit or above.

To meet these temperature requirements, one or more of the following methods should be used when preparing BBQ roasted pork:

- ✓ When several pigs need to be prepared for cooking, prepare only one at a time. Keep the others in a refrigerator.
- ✓ Prepare the pig in stages. For example, during the first two hour stage only spice and wash the pig. Then return the pig to the refrigerator and cool it to 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below. When it has reached the proper temperature, bring it out of the refrigerator to finish drying for up to two hours before putting it into the oven.
- Completely dry the raw, washed pig inside the refrigerator (away from other foods).

### **COOKING:**

California State Law requires that pork must be heated to an internal temperature of at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit to kill any germs that might be present in or on the meat.

✓ Use a metal stem thermometer or an electronic thermocouple thermometer to take the internal temperature of the pig after it is cooked. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the pig, to ensure that it has reached at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit.

### **EQUIPMENT/UTENSILS:**

In order to ensure a safe food product, it is important to use approved equipment and utensils. California State Law requires that all equipment and utensils used for food be commercial grade and meet national equipment sanitation standards.

✓ Equipment and utensils used to prepare, cook, store and serve BBQ roasted pork can be bought from restaurant supply stores. Usually a hardware store will not carry approved equipment and utensils.

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Homemade equipment and utensils rarely meet standards to allow for their use in a restaurant or market. All equipment and utensils need to be approved by your inspector before you can use them.

- ✓ Approved equipment and utensils are made of safe materials, such as stainless steel or glass.
- ✓ Equipment and utensils used in the preparation of BBQ roasted pork must be washed and sanitized before they are used. This includes all chopping blocks and preparation tables.

# **HOT HOLDING/DISPLAY:**

Because BBQ roasted pork is a whole piece of meat, germs are most likely to be on the surface. For this reason, the BBQ roasted pork needs to be held at a surface temperature of 135 degrees Fahrenheit or above.

In order to keep the BBQ roasted pork at 135 degrees Fahrenheit or above, it should be moved after cooking to a hot holding case with an air temperature of at least 150-160 degrees Fahrenheit, depending on how frequently the case is opened. One or more of the following methods may be used to comply with this requirement:

- ✓ Fully enclose the hot holding case. Ensure that the doors are tight fitting in order to maintain the temperature of the BBQ roasted pork.
- ✓ Provide heat lamps to maintain a minimum air temperature of 150-160 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the entire holding case.
- ✓ Keep the BBQ roasted pork inside the oven/roaster and maintain the surface at or above 135 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Place chopped, sliced or cut portions of the BBQ roasted pork in a properly working steamtable or hot holding unit that can maintain the surface at or above 135 degrees Fahrenheit. Do not overfill steamtable insert containers, as it will be extremely difficult to maintain the surface of the BBQ roasted pork at or above 135 degrees Fahrenheit.

# **LEFTOVERS/UNSOLD PORTIONS:**

Any portion that will be resold at a later time must be rapidly cooled to 41 degrees Fahrenheit. Foods such as BBQ roasted pork must be rapidly cooled according to the following:

- ✓ From 135 degrees Fahrenheit to 70 degrees Fahrenheit within 2 hours. The 2-hour time period for cooling begins when the temperature drops below 135 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ✓ From 70 degrees Fahrenheit to 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below within another 4 hours.

Per California State Law, rapid cooling can be done by one or more of the following methods:

- ✓ Place the food in approved shallow pans.
- ✓ Cut or slice the food into smaller or thinner portions (The product should no greater than 3" in depth).
- ✓ Place the food into a refrigerator or freezer.
- ✓ Loosely cover food stored in the refrigerator.

BBQ roasted pork which is reheated must reach an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit. The food must be reheated quickly with equipment such as stoves, ovens or microwaves. Steam tables and hot holding cases are not designed to reheat food and cannot be used for this purpose.

### **SERVING AND STORING FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS:**

BBQ roasted pork is often purchased to be eaten at special events such as weddings and parties. Because the pig must be cooked and prepared before the event, extra care must be taken to keep it at least 135 degrees Fahrenheit until it is served. One or more of the following methods may be used to ensure a safe food product:

- ✓ Immediately after the BBQ roasted pork is done cooking, deliver it so it can be served to guests as soon as possible, or have the customer pick it up when it is done cooking. Tell them to serve it immediately.
- Provide the customer with instructions on how to safely serve and keep the BBQ roasted pork hot.

If you have any questions regarding the safe preparation, cooking and hot holding of BBQ roasted pork please contact your Environmental Health Specialist at (714) 433-6000.

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