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Street Market Chefs put food safety in the picture

A cooking-challenge TV show with 'street-cred' has been turning up the heat on food safety

A new FSA-supported TV show has been cooking up some culinary delights, combining food safety messages with an appetising menu, including local produce.

'Street Market Chefs', which launched on Channel 5 at the end of October, follows presenter Amanda Lamb to market towns across England and Wales to see two local

chefs battle against each other in a cook-off competition with a focus on using local food.

During each programme, Amanda, who previously presented 'A Place in the Sun' and 'Family Supercooks', visits suppliers of local produce sold in the market.

During the cook-off, the street market chefs are each given local ingredients for use in their two courses. These

range from the novelty of Bakewell buffalo to the humble Bristol mushroom. Each chef's job is to create a menu based on local ingredients and woo the judges with the taste and presentation of their food.

Chefs participating in the series include school cooks, RAF chefs, local restaurant chefs and a catering college pupil taking on her teacher.

In addition to the focus on local ingredients, the show incorporates Agency food safety messages and nutrition advice – the latter because the programme was filmed before the Agency changed its remit. The Agency's scientific experts also advised the production company on the ingredients.

Short 15,10 and 5 second films that subtly convey the Food Standards Agency's 4Cs messages on chilling, cooking, cleaning and cross-contamination are also shown at the beginning and



RAF chefs battle it out during the Christmas special

end of the programme and at each advertisement break.

Viewing figures for the second episode show there was an audience of 800,000, massively exceeding the predicted figures of 500,000.

'Street Market Chefs is not only tremendous entertainment but also pretty informative, said FSA Director of Communications, Terrence Collis.

'Healthy eating and food safety advice is skilfully woven into the programme so the viewer never thinks they're being

nagged or got at, while best practice is there for all to see.

'The chefs prepare carefully balanced meals and make sure they handle, store and cook the food properly. You'll never get undercooked chicken on Street Market Chefs' ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

Street Market Chefs can be seen on Tuesdays at 7.30pm on Channel 5. The RAF chefs feature in the final show on 28 December.



Flights of fancy: an RAF main course and dessert including local produce

Conference to put food hygiene under the spotlight

The future of food hygiene is to come under the spotlight on Friday 3 December 2010 at a conference hosted jointly in London by the Food Standards Agency and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)

The 'Future Food Hygiene' conference will examine hygiene delivery across the full length of the food chain, and delegates will be asked how systems for managing and enforcing food hygiene might be transformed to improve food safety.

Lord Young, who recently issued the report 'Common Sense, Common Safety', endorsed the Agency's launch of a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in

England, Wales and Northern Ireland. A similar scheme is already being rolled out in Scotland.

Lord Young's report is at the link below.

Delegates will also hear from international speakers and national experts on how culture, behaviour and innovative practices influence standards of food hygiene.

With the inquest into the death of Mason Jones taking place during the week before the conference, delegates will be well aware of the importance of the issues under discussion. Mason died, aged five, from an E.coli O157 infection. He was one of 157 people who fell ill during the outbreak in South Wales in 2005 ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more, to register an interest in attending, or to contribute to discussions on the future of food hygiene, visit the conference website below [Click here for link to Conference site](#)
[Click here for 'Common Sense, Common Safety' report](#) ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Views sought on meat controls

The Agency is seeking views on proposals to charge the UK meat industry the full cost of official controls on meat.

The controls, a legal requirement under EU law, help ensure that slaughterhouses, meat cutting plants and game handling establishments meet their legal obligations on meat hygiene and animal welfare.

The Agency currently charges businesses for part of the cost of delivering them, but not the full cost.

The consultation includes an option to introduce full cost delivery in a phased approach. The FSA also has an ongoing reform programme involving effective joint working with industry, with the aim of reducing costs by £5.5m to £50m over the next four years.

The Agency has also committed to a reduced charge for small businesses

with a low throughput, with support being capped at a maximum of 70% of the full costs. The Agency will also continue to work on reforming official controls through discussions at a European level.

The closing date is Tuesday 1 February 2011 ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Consultation for England](#)
[Consultation for Northern Ireland](#)
[Consultation for Scotland](#)
[Consultation for Wales](#)



Independent verification for FSA-funded review of organics

The Food Standards Agency has welcomed the results of an independent review by the General Advisory Committee on Science that validated the Agency-commissioned 2009 review of the nutrient content of organic and non-organic foods

A systematic review of the nutritional value of organic food was carried out by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine for the FSA and published in July 2009. The General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) considered concerns put forward by the Soil Association and the Organic Trade Board regarding the validity of the study and the nature of the Agency's



communications. GACS concluded that the study followed good practice at all stages, and noted that comments on the research protocol were invited at an early stage and the research had undergone extensive and rigorous peer review.

The review made two recommendations to the FSA:

- ◆ the Agency should have a clear policy on releasing underpinning data not already in the public domain
- ◆ interested parties should be informed in advance when it is known that results may be published at very short notice and that only limited advance notice can be given of publication

In responding to the GACS review, FSA Chief Scientist Andrew Wadge said: 'I am pleased to see the General Advisory Committee on Science has recognised the quality of the systematic review and the quality of the Agency's research. This is an exemplary piece of work that adds greatly to the evidence base. The systematic review objectively assessed the evidence in a complex area where the quality of the published data is very variable.

'The Agency is committed to using the best available science and evidence, and accepts fully the recommendations made by GACS. We will implement these recommendations to ensure that the Agency's science and evidence continues to be of the highest quality.'

Nutrition policy is now the responsibility of the Department of Health in England and it will be for health ministers to consider whether further research is conducted in this area.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The report can be found at this link [■ ■ ■ ■ ■](#)



October Board meeting online

The Agency's October open Board meeting is now available as a video-on-demand and as a podcast. The agenda included discussion of CCTV in slaughterhouses, Macrory Sanctions, the Government's 'one-in, one-out' regulation initiative, and revised Standing Orders and Code of Conduct for Board meetings.

The meeting was held at Aviation House in London and was chaired by Agency Chair Jeff Rooker (pictured).

FURTHER INFORMATION

To find the Board meeting webcast click on this link



Game on – as FSA takes aim at safer eating

Consumption of lead-shot wild game in Scotland – an FSA Scotland study of habits and behaviours of high-level consumers.



The Food Standards Agency in Scotland is commissioning a research study that will:

- identify those groups of people in Scotland who eat lead-shot wild-game meat regularly and/or in high quantities (so called 'high-level consumers')
- provide information on their habits and behaviours associated with preparation and eating of these meats

There is little information on

which groups of people in society regularly consume high quantities of lead-shot wild game, how much they consume and how they prepare these meats.

This information is required to assess the likely effect of such behaviours on their health and, if necessary, to inform the development of advice on consumption of lead-shot wild game to minimise health risks.

The Agency has



Wild game favourites, pheasant, above and deer, left: little is know about consumption of lead-shot game

commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct this work, which started in November 2010 for approximately nine months They will engage with key stakeholders (ie, those involved in game management) to identify high

level consumers in order to study their attitudes and behaviours in the preparation and eating of lead-shot wild game.

Final results will be made available on the Food Standards Agency's website



DSP in shellfish reaches new high

Record numbers of positive diarrhetic shellfish poisoning (DSP) results in live bivalve molluscs have been reported in Scotland this year, according to the latest shellfish update published by FSA Scotland.

Since 1 April this year, 130 samples have given positive

results, compared to 106 cases for the period 1 April 2009 to the end of March 2010. And on one site – in Arran – a shellfish production area only re-opened on 3 November after being closed for six months, following an exceptionally prolonged toxic episode.

For the reporting year to

date, there have been 52 closures in Scotland, with the final closed site reopening on 4 November. The closures have taken place in 36 different production areas in 5 different local authority areas.

All of the positive in-shore fishery samples in Scotland – these are analysed by Cefas on behalf of the Food

Standards Agency as part of routine monitoring – have been positive for DSP, which is caused by naturally-occurring toxin-producing strains of phytoplankton that can bloom in the summer months.

FURTHER INFORMATION

More details can be found by clicking on this link



Partnership working will be more important to make the most of available resources,

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General advisory committee discusses changed priorities

The General Advisory Committee on Science held its sixth open meeting in London on 19 October and discussed the impact of the change in the Agency's remit, the Spending Review and the Public Bodies Review on FSA science

In times of reducing budgets, the committee advised it will be important to focus on priorities and risks to health, but that this should include strategic, cross-cutting and longer-term issues as well as immediate priorities.

The Public Bodies Review had led to a change of status of some scientific advisory committees (SACs) that jointly advise the Agency and other

Government departments, although no changes were proposed to the committees for which the Agency is lead or sole sponsor. The committee felt that SACs must retain their openness or independence of operation whatever their status, and that the Agency will need to continue to monitor this to ensure it happens in practice.

The committee felt that

partnership working (for example co-funding research) will be even more important to make the most of available resources.

Considering potential benefits and economic pressures, it also felt the Agency should set out clearly when and how this would be accepted and how scientific quality, openness and independence will be ensured.

The committee agreed an outline proposal from its working group to produce a short guidance note on



principles, issues and possible approaches for partnership working with industry/Non Government Organisations for consideration by the full committee by the end of this year ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

Details of GACS meetings are at [this link](#). The next meeting will be on 3 March 2011. For details contact Gwen Aherne, email: gacs@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

EFSA seeks experts to review its science

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has launched a call for scientific experts to take part in a working group to review the quality of EFSA's science.

EFSA is the European Union's scientific risk assessment body on food and

feed safety, nutrition, animal welfare and plant protection and health.

The external review will evaluate a sample of already adopted and published scientific outputs from EFSA.

It will evaluate whether:

◆ best assessment practices

were followed in the development of the output
◆ recommendations were supported by an adequate description of the reasoning underlying the interpretation of the scientific data

◆ the terms of reference were adequately addressed in the

conclusions of the assessment.

EFSA is inviting applications from scientists with expertise in a wide range of scientific fields, including chemical risk assessment, nutrition and novel foods, biological risk assessment and zoonoses data collection, animal health and welfare, plant health, genetically modified

organisms, risk assessment and emerging risks.

You can find out more at the link below. The call will close on Wednesday 15 December 2010 ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

Click here to find out more on the [European Food Safety Authority website](#) ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



Research call issued on listeria

The Food Standards Agency in Scotland has issued a research call to review practices designed to control *Listeria monocytogenes* during smoked fish production.

During the past 10 years there has been an increase in the number of foodborne cases of *Listeria monocytogenes* infection.

Listeria is often present naturally on fish and can survive well in the moist

environments found in fish processing and smoking establishments.

Additionally, the process of cold smoking does not include any killing step, for example cooking, making cold smoked fish a particular risk for listeria contamination.

More work is required to understand the sampling and testing regimes used by manufacturers, particularly small and medium enterprises,

of ready-to-eat foods and their approaches to controlling listeria in the food chain. Key risk areas in the processing chain and gaps in the management of these risks also need to be identified.

More information about the research call and how to apply can be found via the website link below ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Click here for details](#) ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

S14040/14041 Investigation into the levels of environmental contaminants in Scottish marine and freshwater fin-fish and shellfish

This project identified Scottish fishing grounds or aquatic habitats with a history of exposure to environmental contamination and the edible species of fish and shellfish that they support.

Suitable samples of fish and shellfish were taken from selected locations and analysed for environmental contaminants including the presence of heavy metals,

dioxins, polychlorinated biphenyls, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, brominated flame retardants, perfluorinated compounds, polychlorinated naphthalenes and phthalates.

Freshwater fish generally showed higher levels of the main contaminants investigated than did marine species or shellfish (except for arsenic and mercury).

However, it is important to note that, for the organic contaminants, no fish or shellfish samples in this study

breached the existing regulatory limits.

The same was observed for the heavy metals, with some minor excursions beyond the maximum limits for mercury in ling and blue ling which were expected.

The higher results in freshwater species suggest that these are more susceptible to localised pollution effects ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

[Click here for a link to the research report](#) ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



B13015 Literature review on microbiological hazards associated with biltong and similar dried meats

In January 2010, the Agency commissioned a literature review to assess the microbiological hazards associated with biltong and similar dried meat products. The report highlights some of the key process stages that should be considered as part of a robust HACCP plan when producing these products ■

[Click here for the report](#) ■ ■ ■ ■ ■



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