

## RELEVANCE

**Foodborne illnesses are a public health burden and contribute a significant amount to the cost of health care each year.** Foodborne illnesses are preventable and typically underreported. Many cases go unreported due to people not seeking medical care for mild cases. A small percentage of foodborne illnesses are the result of identified foodborne outbreaks. These illnesses certainly pose a public health risk, but can present certain populations with many challenges.

- **Children under 5 years old** have the highest incidence of lab-confirmed infections from some foodborne pathogens.
- **Pregnant women, adults over 65 years old and those with compromised immune systems** are at higher risk of hospitalizations and death from foodborne illnesses.

The **Texas Health and Safety Code, Texas Food Establishment Rules** states that food establishments handling, preparing, or serving exposed time/temperature control for safety foods, are required to have a **certified food manager** on staff at all times. These rules also state that **all food employees** should complete an accredited food handlers program within 60 days of employment. In many cases, well-trained food handlers are more valuable employees.

**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Food Protection Management** program was developed to meet the need for quality food safety education in Texas retail food establishments. Our hands-on *Certified Food Managers course* equips employees with the latest in food safety principles and practices, and prepares them for the National Certified Food Manager's Exam. The 2-hour *food handler program* is accredited by the Department of State Health Services, and trains front-line food service workers on the basic principles of food safety. The *Cooking Up A Cottage Food Business* one-shot program discusses the Texas Cottage Food Law and Cottage Food Business basics.

## RESPONSE

**Family and Community Health Committees** and **residents across District 2** have identified the need for food safety education programs. An agent team of *Family and Community Health Agents from Lubbock, Hockley, Floyd, Hale and Lamb Counties* and *Health Agent from Castro, Hale and Lamb counties* joined together to offer Food Managers Courses across District 2. We were able to offer **seven food managers courses** in the year 2024. The agent team hosted **one Cooking Up A Cottage Food Business class** in Lubbock County (as requested by community members). Individual agents were also able to offer **food handlers courses in their home counties** as shown in results section.

### Target Audience

- These programs targeted potential Food Managers, Food Service Workers and Cottage Food Business Owners.

### Partnerships & Collaborators

#### Certified Food Manager's Course

- Lubbock Restaurant Association
- Texas DSHS Public Sanitation & Retail Food Safety Supervisor
- Burger King & Taco Villa Regional Managers
- South Plains College Biology Dept.

#### Food Handlers Course -Castro, Hale, Lamb Counties (continued partnerships)

- Littlefield ISD
- Plainview ISD

## VALUE STATEMENT

### Food Safety Education

Both those who work in food-service establishments and those who simply cook in their own kitchens benefit from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's food-safety education programs. The resulting improvement in safe food handling benefits consumers by helping prevent food-borne illnesses and the public health care costs they cause.

**1 IN 6  
AMERICANS**

get sick from a foodborne diseases each year in the United States

**31**

known pathogens that can cause foodborne illness

**\$15.6 BILLION**

estimated cost of foodborne illness each year in the United States



## RESPONSE EXAMPLE

### Certified Food Managers

Using the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension "Food Safety: It's Our Business" course book, handouts and curriculum, the District 2 agent team was able to offer **seven in-person Food Managers courses**. The food manager course is designed to be delivered using a team-teaching approach and utilizes *handouts, videos, guest speakers (DSHS Sanitarians), PowerPoint presentations and a printed course book*.

The food manager course consists of **two days of intense education and training**. Participants also complete the National Restaurant Association **ServSafe Exam** at the end of the second class day. Once a participant passes the ServSafe exam, their certification is valid for five years.

### Food Handlers

Utilizing the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Food Handlers curriculum, agents are able to offer education and training to food service workers in their counties.

The food handlers curriculum is a **two-hour training course** designed for in-person delivery, but can also be completed online. The course uses *PowerPoint presentations, handouts and real-life examples* to teach the importance of safe food handling procedures. Upon completion of the Food Handlers course, the participant's certification is valid for two years.

### Cooking Up a Cottage Food Business

Utilizing the presentation and handouts developed by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Food Safety Department the District 2 agent team was able to offer a **3-hour course** in Lubbock County. This course provided education related to **Texas Cottage Food Law** - what can and cannot be sold, packaging requirements, recipe requirements and Cottage Food business basics. **Food Handler Certification** was also completed by course participants. The DSHS Sanitarian and City of Lubbock Food Inspector team were guest speakers and available for questions from participants.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY

- **Certified Food Managers Course** offers a **pre/post test** to evaluate the amount of knowledge gained and intent to adopt best practices. Another evaluation of knowledge gain is the **passing of the ServSafe Exam**.
- **Food Handlers Course** is evaluated using a **pre/post survey** to measure the amount of knowledge gained.
- **Cooking Up a Cottage Food Business** is evaluated using a **post-survey** to measure participant intention to use best practices under Cottage Food Law.

## RESULTS

### Certified Food Manager Course



**70 participants (adults & youth)**

- 60% Female
- 65% Hispanic/30% Caucasian
- Lubbock Co. - 45 participants
- Hockley Co. - 22 participants
- Floyd Co. - 3 participants

\*numbers reflective of team teaching



**54% increase in knowledge ON PRE/POST TEST**



**55% passed National Certification Exam ON FIRST OR SECOND ATTEMPT**

**57% of participants** had *not taken the National Certification Exam before this course*

#### Intent to Adopt Best Practices

**20% increase** in intent to use a food thermometer to always check doneness of food

**14% increase** in intent to use soap when washing hands

**16% decrease** in frequency of touching food with bare hands

### Cooking Up A Cottage Food Business

**6 participants (100% female)**



**100% plan to utilize cottage law information**



**100% plan to utilize proper labeling of products**



**83% reported using recommended canning practices**

**66% of participants** were in the *planning stages of starting a Cottage Food Business*

### Food Handlers Course



**6 participants 6 ADULTS**

- 100% Female
- 50% Hispanic
- 33% Multi-Racial
- 16% Caucasian

\*numbers reflective of program during cottage food class



**11% increase in knowledge ON PRE/POST TEST**



**83.3% have not taken a class with Extension**



**100% client satisfaction**

**83.3% of participants** have *worked in food service before*.

## FUTURE PROGRAMMING

As more agents in District 2 became certified to teach courses in Food Protection Management, we plan to expand our teaching group and area. In 2024, we have plans to partner together and offer five Certified Food Manager trainings and a Cottage Food Law training in the South Plains District. We will continue our partnership with Burger King and Taco Villa to provide training for their employees.



For more information:

**Cory Edwards**  
**CEA-FCH, Lubbock County**

806-775-1740  
cory.edwards@ag.tamu.edu