

Dubai Bans Raw Eggs in Ready-to-Eat Products

DUBAI, UAE - Dubai eateries have been barred from using raw eggs in ready-to-eat products after authorities found them as a cause for many salmonella infections.

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The Food Control Department of the Dubai Municipality has introduced new regulations that restrict the use of raw and under-cooked eggs and make it mandatory for declaring their use in food labels or menus, officials said on Tuesday.

Chocolate mousse, tiramisu, garlic paste, freshly-made mayonnaise and some other deserts and pastries are among the ready-to-eat items through which unpasteurised eggs could cause salmonella infection.

The department has already launched an awareness campaign regarding the risks of consuming such freshly prepared foods if they contain raw eggs and is implementing new regulations for eateries, said the municipality's senior food studies and surveys officer Bobby Krishna.

According to Khaleej Times, the move follows epidemiological studies conducted on the data from the food-borne disease surveillance system launched by the department and the Dubai Health Authority last year.

"We found that there are problems with consumers eating products which have got eggs that are not sufficiently cooked in the end product," Mr Krishna said referring to the cases of salmonella infections that were tracked down by the officials.

"Normally eggs have very low contamination levels. We are talking about the egg products in which you mix raw eggs with other stuff like milk and sugar that act as another nutrient medium in which bacteria can thrive if you keep it out for a long time. First you are changing the texture of the whole thing and then you are putting it in warm temperature for a long time. That is when the bacteria multiply," he explained.

There are existing food safety regulations that stipulate eggs and products made of them must always be refrigerated. However, products with uncooked eggs can still cause infections.

Though he did not give the exact number of salmonella cases recorded last year, Krishna said salmonella enteritidis was one of the topmost food-borne diseases that were reported to the hospitals in the emirate. Fever, abdominal cramps and diarrhoea are the main symptoms of this disease.

Though the surveillance system has helped in detecting the link between the infection and the consumption of raw eggs, Mr Krishna said it is difficult to trace the source of infection to any particular outlet. "You can't blame an outlet because they also don't know there is a problem. You need to first tell them what the problem is and then you can come up with regulations and book them for violations."

The department is now targeting eateries that prepare food items with raw eggs to tell them to use the alternative options. "It is safe to use pasteurised eggs" and proper labelling can also help as many consumers don't know that some food products like mousse and garlic paste have raw eggs in them. When in doubt, consumers can always ask the person-in-charge or the hygiene officer of an outlet for the ingredients," said Mr Krishna.

Not all outlets are however using raw eggs in their ready-to-eat products, said Lulu hypermarkets' hygiene manager Suraj Parakat. "Many bakeries are using readymade powders for mousse. For our garlic paste, we are using pasteurised eggs," he said.