Follow Food Safety Guidelines with Bagged Salad Greens

It seems every few months the news is saturated with concerns about the safety of the food consumers buy. Once again bagged, prewashed salad greens are making news.

This time it is not for a food borne illness outbreak, but because a national consumer magazine did a study to learn the microbial count on packaged greens, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension food specialist.

The study found bacteria that increase the diner’s risk of illness. In some cases the bacteria levels found were very high. Study results also varied widely from sample to sample, from brand to brand, and even from bag to bag of the same brand.

The study showed that those bags of greens that were closer to their use-by date contained higher levels of bacteria than those that were further away. The type of package, whether it is a plastic bag or plastic box, did not make any difference.

Researchers at the University of Georgia studied E. coli contamination on lettuce and learned that the bacteria cells attach to the surface and inside the holes the various lettuce varieties use to breath. They also found E. coli cells in higher numbers on cut edges of lettuce pieces and in bruised areas.

Consumers can reduce their risk of illness from bacteria, including E. coli, by washing salad greens before using them.

This includes those greens that are packaged as ‘prewashed’ or ‘triple washed.’ Rinse lettuce just before serving because bacteria grow more quickly in greens that are stored wet. If you need to clean it ahead of time, be sure to dry the greens well either in a salad spinner or pat dry with a clean towel.

To clean greens the right way, start with clean hands. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before handling the greens. In addition, wash out your sink with a sanitizing solution of one teaspoon bleach mixed into one quart of water.

Wash the greens in a sink full of fresh, cool water, swishing with your hands. Lift greens from the water and drain in a colander. Repeat the process with clean water until no grit remains. Washing with soap, detergent, vinegar or produce washes is not recommended.

Cut away damaged, rusted and wilted pieces, along with those that look slimy. Dry the lettuces before using in a salad as dressing will slide off wet leaves. Be sure to store salad in the refrigerator.

While there’s no absolute way to eliminate the risk of food borne illness associated with greens, following these few steps can help consumers reduce the risk of getting sick.
Avoiding Osteoporosis

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, osteoporosis is a major health threat for an estimated 44 million Americans. Here are some suggestions for building stronger bones and combating the disease:

- **Resistance training.** Use weights or resistance bands 3 times a week.
- **Walking** always helps. “Spurt” exercises like tennis, racquet ball and handball are excellent for increasing bone density.
- **Sunshine.** As much as possible, exercise in the early morning or late afternoon to increase vitamin D synthesis. Wear a hat and use sunscreen.
- **Diet.** Unless you are lactose intolerant, eat dairy products every day for their high calcium content.
- **Supplements.** Both vitamin D and calcium can be supplemented through readily available products.

Save Money: It Will Pay Off in the Long Run

The saving rate in America continues to be at or near zero. A recent survey found that a third of Americans are not saving. Some ways to cut spending that can add up to big savings over time include:

$ Comparison shop to find the best deal on necessary purchases such as food, transportation and insurance.

$ Refrain from over-spending on birthdays and holidays. A few well chosen gifts are likely to be more appreciated than gifts quickly chosen in a shopping mall venture.

$ Stay far away from payday loans. They can charge interest rates of up to 500 percent.

$ Save all of your loose change.

Easy Chicken Potpie

Prep: 20 minutes, bake 50 minutes. 6 servings.

1 can (10 3/4 oz.) reduced-fat, reduced-sodium condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
1 can (10 3/4 oz.) reduced fat, reduced-sodium Condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
1/2 cup, plus 2/3 cup fat-free milk, divided
1/2 tsp. dried thyme
1/4 tsp. pepper
1/8 tsp. poultry seasoning
2 pkg. (16 oz. each) frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
1-1/2 cups cooked chicken breast
1-1/2 cups reduced-fat biscuit/baking mix

In a large bowl, combine soups, 1/2 cup milk, thyme, pepper and poultry seasoning. Stir in vegetables and chicken.

Transfer to a 13-inch x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. In small bowl, stir biscuit mix and remaining milk until blended. Drop by 12 rounded tablespoonfuls onto chicken mixture.

Bake, uncovered, at 350°F for 40-50 minutes or until filling is bubbly and biscuits are brown.

Nutrition: 1-1/3 cups chicken mixture with 2 biscuits equals 342 calories, 5 g fat, 36 mg cholesterol, 871 mg sodium, 53 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 21 g protein.
Cinco de Mayo

Our Cultural Enrichment project for 2010 is to assist the Purcell Library with their Cinco de Mayo celebration. The festivities kick off the week of May 3 with a series of OHCE sponsored workshops, then conclude with a family celebration the evening of May 7. Several members have been contacted to assist with the workshops; other members will be needed to help at the celebration on May 7. OHCE members can lend a hand by volunteering to be crowd counters, sit at the information table, pass out door prize tickets, help at the children’s crafts tables (supplies provided), distribute children’s books or assist with the salsa contest. The week’s schedule is as follows:

- Flower Pot Painting—Day and time to be announced.
- Wednesday, May 5, 3:30 p.m., Health Food Demonstrations by Chickasaw Nation Fresh Start Program.
- Thursday, May 6, 3:30 p.m., Crochet/Knitting Workshop.
- Friday, May 7, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Family Celebration.

All programs will be held at the Purcell Library, 919 N. 9th, in Purcell. To volunteer, please contact Mickey Simpson at OSU Extension Office, 527-2174.

Salsa Contest

There is a salsa contest in conjunction with the Cinco de Mayo Celebration on May 7 at 6:00 p.m. Entries consist of a pint jar of salsa. First, second and third place awards will be given; winners will receive Wal-Mart gift cards.

Spring Council—Monday, May 17
10:00 a.m.—place to be announced
Program-Fair Judging Standards

Join us May 17 for Spring OHCE Council beginning at 10:00 a.m. A special hands-on program to share information about “Fair Judging Standards” is planned for that morning. Susan Murray, Southwest District Extension 4-H Program Specialist from Duncan, will discuss current judging standards for canning, sewing and baking.

Hostess club is Cole.

To continue our Cinco de Mayo celebration, lunch will be “make your own” taco salad. County Council will provide the meat, drinks and paper products. Groups are asked to bring the following items:

- Washington: Two crock pots of pinto beans
- Blanchard: Tortilla chips for around 40 people
- Town & Country: Sour cream, salsa, queso dip
- Stealey: Chopped lettuce, onions and tomatoes
- Cole: Grated cheese and desserts
“Enrich Your Life” Senior Adult Conference—July 27

Mark on your calendar to attend the “Enrich Your Life” Senior Adult Conference on July 27, 2010, at First Baptist Church, Newcastle. The conference is one of OHCE’s featured projects for the year; our co-sponsors are First Baptist Church of Newcastle and McClain County OSU Extension Service. The conference committee is busy planning an exciting conference—our featured speaker is a physician with the McBride Clinic who will talk on hip and knee replacement surgery. Workshops planned include: Travel in Oklahoma, Where’s My Treasure, Senior Life Options, Trees & Shrubs for Oklahoma, Living with Diabetes, Vision Care, Financial Planning and Taxes, Tough Topics for Your Doctor, Fit After Fifty and Identity Theft.

All McClain County OHCE groups are asked to provide one door prize worth $15-$20 and baked items for the hospitality table. Members will also be asked to help with registration and serve as workshop hostesses.

Spread the word to your friends, relatives and senior friends. THIS WILL BE A GREAT CONFERENCE!

District Meeting Report

Congratulations to Peggy Christian from the Stealey group, who was named District Heart of OHCE award winner for 2010. Peggy was honored with a certificate and gift. Martha Schrader from Stealey was recognized as the McClain County OHCE Member award recipient and Elaine Dahl from Cole received the McClain County OHCE Rookie tribute.

Sixteen McClain County OHCE members ventured to Lawton on March 19 for District Council. Attending were Martha Schrader, Peggy Howard, Phyllis Linker, Mary Isbill, Carolyn Jordan, Margie Moore, Kathy Langley, Peggy Hill, Onetia Staton, Elaine Dahl, Roberta Buller, Margaret McKinney, Shirley Ferris, Marilyn Rowland, JoAnn Wood, and Karen Smith.

OHCE Week—May 2-8

All HCE groups are encouraged to participate in OHCE Week—suggestions are displays in local businesses, news articles, special community service projects or club events. Take lots of photos and be sure to report activities to your local newspapers.

Date for Your Calendar

The OHCE State Meeting will be July 18-20, 2010, at the Clarion Convention Center in Oklahoma City. Registration information will be available in the next newsletter.

Pontotoc County OHCE Quilt Show, For the Love of Quilting

This event, featuring a quilt show, free demonstrations, door prizes and merchants’ mall, will be held April 23rd and 24th at the Pontotoc County Agri-Plex, 1700 N. Broadway, in Ada. Showtimes are 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. There is a $2.00 admission fee.
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Stealey HCE Fair Board Meeting, CH, 7:00 pm, Cole HCE, Washington HCE, HCE Leader Lesson, Rm. 111, CH, 1:30 pm, McClain County Youth Spring Horse Show, Expo

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1 SW District Volunteers Meeting, Anadarko

Holiday, office closed
Leaders’ Training for May

Leaders’ Training for May will be taught on April 15 at 1:30 p.m. at the McClain County Courthouse, Room 111, Purcell. The lesson will be on Celebration of Families and will be taught by Mickey Simpson. This lesson is on family activities to help general special memories for family members of all ages.

Leaders’ Training for June

Lesson is May 20 at the Purcell Library at 1:30 p.m. This lesson is on Facebook, Twitter, I Technology. The lesson will be taught by Phillis Cothren, Garvin County Extension Educator, FCS. The session will discuss the basics of some of the incredible communication tools we have available with lots of examples for real-world, everyday people.

This newsletter is one way of communicating educational information to the interested citizens of McClain County. The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference made to commercial products or trade names is with the understanding that no discrimination is intended or no endorsement is implied. McClain County FCS Newsline is published bi-monthly at a cost of $35.00 for 162 copies.

Sincerely,

Mickey Simpson
Extension Educator,
Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H