



## *Quality Food Analysis, Consultation & Training Services, LLC*

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### August 2007: Gloves

The question of mandating wearing or not wearing gloves to handle ready-to-eat food has been asked time and time again. The mandatory glove rule was first introduced at a national level in the 1993 FDA Food Code. Further, in the 1997 FDA Food Code, Section 3-301.11(B) states that, "Except when washing fruits and vegetables as specified under § 3-302.15 or when approved, food employees may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves or dispensing equipment." Around 1997, the FDA also began putting efforts into have states adopt FDA food code as state regulations, in order to provide standardization throughout the country. Due to these efforts, many of the states began adopting the FDA Food Code as state regulation during this time and inadvertently adopted this mandatory glove use or utensils during the adoption process.

Not everyone felt that mandatory glove use or utensils guaranteed a higher level of protection than clean hands. The National Restaurant Association, along with California, Florida, and Texas recognized that in some instances, avoiding bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food would be impossible; e.g., peeling shrimp, peeling fruit and handling hot foods. The National Restaurant Association has also pushed for a more realistic approach than mandatory glove use or utensils; a "real world" solution through improving hand washing management and restricting sick employees from handling food.

In the 2001 FDA Food Code, Section 3-301.11, exceptions have been made to the federal guidelines where, food employees not serving a highly susceptible population (young, old, pregnant, immuno-compromised) may contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands if: (1) The permit holder obtains prior approval from the regulatory authority; (2) Written procedures are maintained in the food establishment and made available to the regulatory authority. For more details, please contact your local enforcement agency.

Whether you decide to glove, or not to glove, please remember that the main emphasis of this topic is to minimize foodborne illness as a result of dirty hands. Improper hand washing and sick food employees handling food are main causes of foodborne illness. Proper training and management oversight is key.

Five minutes a day of staff training would make all the difference. Why don't you try various methods to incorporate training into your work day? If you have any questions regarding sanitation or food safety, or require additional information regarding staff training, please feel free to e-mail us.