Internal Cooking Temperatures: Restaurant Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

Hazards of incorrect internal cooking temperatures in a restaurant:

1. **Undercooked meat:** If meat is not cooked to the appropriate internal temperature, harmful bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli may survive, causing food poisoning. Symptoms of food poisoning include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps.
2. **Overcooked meat:** Overcooked meat may result in a tough and dry texture, making it less appetizing for customers.
3. **Inconsistent food quality:** cooking food to the correct internal temperature not only ensures safety but also affects the quality and taste of the food. Undercooked food can be tough, dry, or chewy, while overcooked food can be dry and flavorless.
4. **Legal and Financial Consequences:** Restaurants that serve undercooked food can face legal action and fines from health authorities. Additionally, if customers become sick from eating undercooked food, it can harm the restaurant's reputation and result in lost business.

STATS

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that each year in the United States, an estimated 48 million workers get sick from foodborne illnesses, resulting in 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. While not all of these illnesses are caused by incorrect cooking temperatures, it is one of the leading causes of foodborne

illness.

- The CDC reports that from 2011 to 2020, there were 15 multistate outbreaks of foodborne illnesses associated with meat and poultry products, resulting in 963 illnesses, 217 hospitalizations, and 6 deaths. Improper cooking temperatures were identified as one of the contributing factors.
- In a study published in the Journal of Food Protection, it was found that the majority of foodservice operators (87%) did not use a thermometer to check the internal temperature of cooked foods, increasing the risk of serving undercooked food and causing foodborne illnesses.
- Health Canada estimates that there are approximately 4 million cases of foodborne illness in Canada every year, resulting in 11,500 hospitalizations and 238 deaths. Improper cooking temperatures are one of the main causes of these illnesses.
- In a study published in the Canadian Journal of Microbiology, it was found that 48% of chicken samples purchased from retail stores in Canada were contaminated with Campylobacter, a bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses. Improper cooking temperatures were identified as one of the contributing factors in these contaminations.