



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Office of Communication

1300 E Avenue □ Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8524 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 4-8524

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 32-10
Date: March 25, 2010
Contact: Kevin Robinson, public affairs specialist
Tel.: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8773
E-mail: kevin.robinson@deca.mil

Everyone has a role to play in food safety

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
DeCA public affairs specialist*

FORT LEE, Va. – Staying informed of the various food-safety-related recalls can be a full-time job. Thanks to a small army of military and civilian health specialists, commissary customers don't have that worry when they select an item from a store shelf. But, once shoppers take their food home, they still have a responsibility to ensure the food remains safe before they consume it.

That's the message the Defense Commissary Agency is emphasizing in April as part of its semi-annual food safety and defense awareness campaign, said Army Col. David R. Schuckenbrock, DeCA's director of health and safety.

“When a customer walks into any of our 254 stores, they can be assured that a network of food safety specialists is working to make the food there the safest and most secure available,” he said. “But food safety doesn't stop there. It's still important for anyone who handles food at home to store food at proper temperatures, avoid cross contamination when preparing food, keep food preparation and storage areas clean, and practice good hand-washing habits when handling food.”

At scheduled times throughout the month of April, customers can expect to see information stations in commissaries worldwide promoting food safety and defense. This awareness effort brings together commissary sanitation coordinators with installation military health specialists from the U.S. Army Veterinary Command, U.S. Air Force Public Health, or the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center as they reinforce consumer responsibilities

spelled out in “Be Food Safe.”

Be Food Safe is a campaign developed by the Partnership for Food Safety Education to inform the public of proper food-handling techniques that they can do at home. DeCA’s food safety officials are asking commissary customers to remember the following home tips for cooking, storing and heating leftovers:

- **Clean** cooking and storage areas – cutting boards, knives and countertops – frequently, preferably not with the same cloth used to wash your dishes. Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- **Separate** foods that may cross contaminate. This means keeping raw meat, poultry and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.
- **Cook** food thoroughly and use a food thermometer. Reheat cooked leftovers to 165 degrees Fahrenheit as measured with a food thermometer. When microwaving leftovers, check for cold spots in the food where bacteria can survive, and cook until the item is completely done. Always cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking. If the microwave has no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- **Chill** leftover food at the correct temperature. Refrigerate leftovers within two hours, and ensure your refrigerator stays at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator.

Practicing good food safety habits isn’t something that the military health community focuses on solely during its awareness campaign, Schuckenbrock said.

“This campaign gives us an opportunity as military and civilian health professionals to help educate our patrons about the food safety measures we concentrate on all year long,” he added. “DeCA is always focused on food defense by maintaining facilities and equipment in good repair. And, the agency continually improves the design of its stores and distribution centers to enhance the agency’s ability to deliver safe and high-quality food items to our military and their families.”

For more information on food safety, visit the DeCA Web site, <http://www.commissaries.com>, and click on the “Stay Informed” section to find out about any recalls specifically affecting products sold in commissaries. The DeCA Web site’s food safety page is also a good source to access links to various consumer safety sites such as the Food and Drug Administration’s Web site, <http://www.recalls.gov>. For more information on Be Food Safe, go to <http://www.befoodsafe.org/>.

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,300 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*