

Good Hygiene Practice for Vacuum Packed Food

DOH Food No.1001302231, Aug 22, 2011

- I. The competent authority: Department of Health (DOH), Executive Yuan
- II. Basis for the enactment: The stipulations in Item 1, Article 20 of the Act Governing Food Sanitation.
- III. Promulgation of “Good Hygiene Practice for Vacuum-Packed Foods”
 - (1) This practice is applicable to related food proprietors of vacuum-packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) foods
 - (2) In addition to complying with the related stipulations in this practice, related food proprietors of vacuum-packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) foods shall also comply with the stipulations in the Good Hygiene Practice for Foods.
 - (3) Related terms in this practice are defined as follows:
 1. Food Proprietor: The proprietor that operates the manufacturing, processing, preparing, packaging, transporting, storage, selling, input and output of foods or food additives.
 2. Vacuum-Packed Food: The food that is degassed and sealed within an hermetically sealed container.
 3. Hermetically Sealed Container: means a container that is designed and intended to be secure against the entry of microorganisms and thereby to maintain the commercial sterility of its contents after processing, including containers made of metal, glass, retort pouch, plastic and laminated composite materials, as well as other containers conforming to the aforementioned condition.
 4. RTE (ready-to-eat) Food: The product that can be instantly edible after being unsealed, with no need to be processed by any cooking step.

5. Salt Concentration: The percentage of the salt mass accounting for the whole solution mass.
 6. Water Activity: Water activity (a_w) is a measure of the free moisture in a product and is the quotient of the water vapor pressure of the substance divided by the vapor pressure of pure water at the same temperature.
- (4) Good Hygiene Practice for Vacuum-Packed and RTE (ready-to-eat) Foods Sold and Stored at Room Temperature:
1. If such a product meets any of the following conditions, it can be stored and sold at room temperature.
 - A. Water Activity ≤ 0.85
 - B. pH value ≥ 9.0
 - C. Commercially sterilized products
 - D. Acid foods (natural or normal pH equal to 4.6 or below)
 - E. Fermented foods (when the pH of the food is reduced to 4.6 or less by the growth of acid producing microorganisms; or salt concentration $\geq 10\%$)
 - F. Carbonated beverages
 - G. Any other condition that can inhibit *Clostridium botulinum* at room temperature.
 2. Products with the first, second, fourth, fifth conditions of above mentioned shall be stored and sold in accordance with their labeling. The proprietors shall reserve related test reports or certification documents proved by the laboratories accredited by the central competent authority for reference. The third conditions of above mentioned shall conform to the Good Hygiene Practice for Canned Foods.

(5) Good Hygiene Practice for Vacuum-Packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) Foods Sold and Stored in Cold Storage:

1. As for vacuum-packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) foods with water activity above 0.85 that require cold storage, all the processes for storing, transporting and selling them shall be undertaken in the status of cold storage at 7°C .

2. Shelf life of Vacuum-Packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) Foods in Cold Storage:

If such a product does not meet any of the following conditions, its shelf life shall be within ten days. The proprietors shall reserve related test reports or certification documents proved by the laboratories accredited by the central competent authority, for reference.

A. Added with Nitrite or Nitrate

B. Water Activity \leq 0.94

C. pH value $<$ 4.6

D. Salt Concentration $>$ 3.5% (only applicable to smoked and fermented products)

E. Any other condition that can inhibit *Clostridium botulinum*.

(6) Good Hygiene Practice for Vacuum-Packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) Foods Sold and Stored in Refrigeration: All the processes for storing, transporting and selling the vacuum-packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) foods in refrigeration shall be undertaken in the status of refrigeration at -18°C .

(7) Registration shall be required for vacuum-packed, RTE (ready-to-eat) foods which are high-risk in botulism as determined by risk assessment.