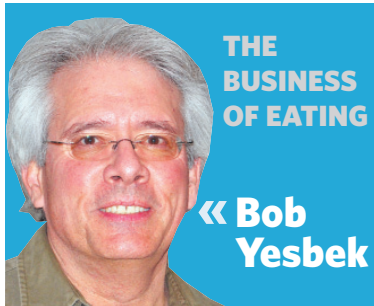




Science and cooperation help keep our food safe



Every time I visit an upscale restaurant for a bit of creative cuisine, I can't help but remember TV chef Julia Child's rather disturbing observation: "It's so beautifully arranged on the plate; you know someone's fingers have been all over it."

In spite of that inescapable truth, the fact is that the majority of food-borne ailments occur at home - not in restaurants.

Improved cooperation between the industry and government agencies helps to ensure our food remains wholesome and safe during the sometimes convoluted journey from farm to table. They say experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted, and that certainly applies to the volumes of rules and regulations that grew out of real-life encounters with deadly food-borne pathogens.

As science and technology merged with "CSI"-style detective work, these regulations became organized into a logical sequence of food-safety procedures known as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP).

From the moment a seed is planted or an animal is born or hatched, HACCP are identified and monitored to ensure the risk of contamination remains as low as possible.

On the restaurant level, strict procedures for storing, cooking and serving become a key element in the training of managers, cooks and even servers.

How long did that case of spare ribs sit on the loading dock? Is that salad stored on a shelf below the raw chicken in the fridge? How hot is the center of that juicy burger? Why is my server's thumbprint in my mashed potatoes?

Most states mandate food-service education that specifically addresses these critical control points in which quality is threatened by temperature, cross-contamination between raw meats and ready-to-eat items - and wherever that server's thumb might have been before it landed in your mashers.

Most of these practices are hidden behind the swinging

doors of professional kitchens. The most obvious to the customer is probably those multi-lingual HACCP-mandated restroom signs insisting that employees must wash their hands before returning to work. I often hear people complain that the person preparing their food wasn't wearing gloves, and it seems like that would be a major offense.

Interestingly enough, the state health inspector for one of my former restaurants disagreed. She maintained gloves can give workers a false sense of security handling nonfood items such as money, doorknobs, cans, boxes, etc.

The next time you order from a carry-out or a stand at an outdoor event, watch the preparer's hands. Does he or she handle your money and make change wearing the same gloves that touched your corn dog? In the words of my health inspector, "The only things those gloves keep clean are their hands."

Much of this boils down to trust. You trust the server or line cook to care enough about his job to scrub his hands after visiting the restroom.

You rely on the restaurant owner to operate in her best interest by making it clear to employees that the business - and their livelihoods - depend on vigilant food handling. Customers might forgive the wrong appetizer appearing at their table, but they won't soon forget a night spent with food poisoning.

Happily, all this attention to science and regulation is working, and chances are good that all your restaurant experiences will be nontoxic. In fact, epidemiological studies have shown food served by McDonald's and other fast-food chains is safer than that prepared in your own home.

Furthermore, technical advances and input from the food industry have given rise to the next generation of protocols known as the Food Safety Modernization Act, further streamlining the capacity to prevent, detect and respond to food safety problems.

It's no secret that the customers' sense of well-being is vital to success in the restaurant business.

As a result, restaurateurs don't like to talk much about food safety and sanitation. But the good ones think about it all the time.

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SALON MILTON OWNER JOHN POTOCKI, left, teaches camouflage color to an online audience at Stylelist.com, while cameraman Jason Gleockler films Potocki and model Sue Fox. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Salon Milton featured on Stylelist.com

By Kara Nuzback
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Salon Milton is hot. So hot, it was chosen by American Online Media to be among the first 100 salons from across the country featured in an online, how-to video series. "Hot in My Salon," on Stylelist.com, features short educational videos on hair and beauty trends, techniques and treatments.

"Doing the video was a lot of fun because it was like teaching again," said Salon Milton owner John Potocki. Potocki, who relocated from Washington, D.C., to Milton five years ago, worked for Aveda for 16 years. During that time, he traveled across five states teaching various haircutting, styling and color techniques.

The video series showcases salons from Hollywood to Boston to Miami. Each salon chooses a signature hair, make-up or spa trend and guides viewers to recreate at home what's popular in the salon.

Potocki's featured signature, called camouflage color, is a color process for gray hair. Camouflaging keeps hair gray, but lowers the percentage. The results look natural and make the client appear five to 10 years younger, he said.

"I figured they probably wouldn't be doing many things that would be useful to men also," Potocki said. Camouflage color also adds dimension by using multiple shades to prevent a monochromatic look.

"Hot in My Salon" Producer Kim Peeler told Potocki, she was searching the internet for a salon to represent Delaware. When she came across salonmilton.com, Peeler told Potocki, it had the best vibe, so she

Salon collects food for needy

Though the holidays are over, the hungry still need help. Salon Milton on Chestnut Street gives residents and guests the opportunity to donate nonperishable food items, paper goods and toiletries to Casa San Francisco. Drop off goods at Salon Milton, and the staff will donate to Casa San Francisco on Mulberry Street every month through April 2011. Casa San Francisco offers shelter, food, medications, laundry, clothing and transportation to Sussex County residents in need.

asked him to come up with an idea and she would send a crew to film it.

"I knew pretty much immediately what I wanted to do," Potocki said. With the help of staff members Amelia Miles, Opal McAdams, Amber Jones and Aveda representative Amy Hart, Potocki shows his online audience how to execute camouflage color on his model, Milton resident Sue Fox.

Potocki said it took eight hours of filming to produce the two-minute video. Some shots had to be retaken four and five times because of school buses and Dogfish Head trucks passing outside.

Despite the hard work, Potocki said he has already received calls and emails about the video from people in New Mexico and Georgia. Combined with clients who already come to the salon from the Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia areas, Potocki said

he hopes business will continue to grow.

"There's always that ripple effect," he said.

Potocki is hosting a "Hot for My Salon" premiere party from 4 to 6 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22 at Salon Milton on Chestnut Street. The party will feature a showing of the video, giveaways and light refreshments. Potocki will offer 15 percent off retail merchandise for the duration of the party.

Clients will also be able to set appointments for Salon Milton's annual Milton Historical Society Benefit. The five-hour fundraiser will feature haircuts, manicures, hand massages and other treatments along with a raffle, 50/50 and bake sale. The event will take place from 12 to 5 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 13, at Salon Milton.

Robert McGowan, a new stylist at Salon Milton, came to the Cape Region from Collegeville, Pa., where he owned a salon for 35 years. Now a Lewes resident, McGowan is offering new clients a free haircut with any color treatment, including camouflage color, through the end of March.

Potocki said he enjoys that Dogfish Head Brewery, located steps from the door to Salon Milton, is being nationally recognized on the television series, "Brewmasters," and now his salon is being featured on a popular website.

"It's fun to see what can come out of a small town," he said.

Salon Milton is open Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information about Salon Milton or to attend the premiere party, call 684-1880 or visit salonmilton.com. To view Salon Milton's "Hot in My Salon" video, visit stylelist.com/hair-salons/salonmilton.