

FoodWise

BABERGH'S FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4

Food sampling and your business

Many of you will have had a visit from a Babergh officer who has said something along the lines of *"We are participating in a national survey of the microbiological quality of pate. May I take a sample from your premises?"* A sample is supplied, bagged and tagged by the officer and they disappear off to the next premises leaving you wondering *"What was that all about?"*. The aim of this article is to give you a bit more of an idea what food sampling is all about.

Babergh District Council participates in regional and national food sampling surveys to determine the microbiological quality of food sold in the district. This usually involves having officers purchase food as customers i.e. **without** announc-



ing who we are, although some surveys require that we introduce ourselves and collect additional

information about the premises and/or foodstuff. As far as possible we attempt to sample from as many different food premises across the district as is practicable. However larger premises and those selling a wide range of high risk foods will tend to be subject to a higher frequency of sampling than small premises and those selling largely low risk foods. A typical food retailer is unlikely to be subject to sampling more than three times in a year. Samples taken 'as a customer' are obviously paid for, and you should always be offered reimbursement for 'announced' samples.

The food samples are transported in an insulated box with ice packs (to maintain the food in as close a condition to when it was bought as possible) to Chelmsford Food, Water and Environmental Laboratory for testing. The food is then analysed to check for the

presence of harmful or high numbers of bacteria that may



arise through poor storage, handling or preparation of the

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