

Illness Outbreak

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Time is critical in any illness outbreak. Quick action is needed to find and secure any food samples remaining, log temperatures, and question those involved.

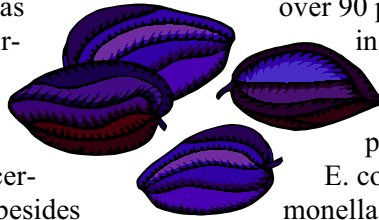
This outbreak showed the importance of the various agencies working as a team. The public depends on all of us to do the best job possible. This may mean admitting that we do not have all the necessary knowledge, equipment, or experience. A successful investigation can be lost if we forget we, as a community of professionals, must support each other.

Tara Renner

Behold, the power of ... prunes?

A Kansas State University food microbiologist has found that certain foods, besides offering nutrition, can also serve an additional purpose -- they possess antimicrobial properties that can help make meat products safer.

Daniel Y.C. Fung, a KSU professor of Animal Sciences and Industry, and his graduate research assistant, Leslie Thompson, have tested the effect that varying levels of dried plum mixtures had on ground meat that was contaminated with common foodborne pathogens. Their research, sponsored by the California Dried Plum Board, indicates that raw meats mixed with as little as 3 percent of plum extract are

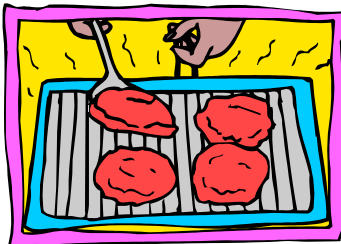


over 90 percent effective in suppressing the growth of major foodborne pathogens such as E. coli 0157:H7, Salmonella, Listeria, Yersinia enterocolitica, and Staphylococcus aureus.

Fung has previously conducted research using spices such as garlic and cinnamon to kill foodborne pathogens in ground beef. Unlike spices, which can alter the taste of meats, Fung said the plum extracts lack a "plum taste" so foods taste "normal."

Similar research conducted by scientists at Texas A&M University has found that adding dried plum mixtures to raw meat

improved the quality of reheated products by enhancing the moisture of the



meat. Fung said adding dried plum mixtures to meat works as an antioxidant to prevent lipid oxidation, which is similar to freezer burn in meat, as well as being an antimicrobial agent to kill pathogens.

Fung said he is excited about the use of plum extracts. In addition to suppressing pathogens, he said the extract also has "good functionality" as it can enhance the moistness of meat and increase the yields.

Fung hopes to expand the research to poultry products such as chicken and turkey. Future research will involve experiments to determine if plum extracts can extend the shelf life of meats as well.

"The potential is unlimited," Fung said. "This is a win-win situation for everybody involved in food science and safety."

From KSU press release

Can you recognize a ready-to-eat food?

Which of the following is a "ready-to-eat" food as defined by the food rule?

- Apple
- Buns for sandwiches
- Lettuce
- Meat loaf (properly cooked and cooled)

The answer is "all of the above."

Remember, food safety is our concern, not whether the food is appetizing, or

whether or not it would normally be served in its present form.

As long as the food is safe to eat, or edible, it is "ready-to-eat."

Inspectors must correctly identify such foods to determine violations of sections like 136 and 174, that cover the concepts of "no bare hand contact," and "date marking."

