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December 2, 2005

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Director and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON CULTURAL FOOD PREPARATION LAWS**

On October 18, 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved a motion by Supervisor Antonovich instructing the Director of Public Health to convene meetings with restaurant groups representing various Asian cuisines to determine and report back in 30 days regarding additional training on the recent State law changes concerning food temperature and additional studies on the safety of traditional cultural food preparation techniques. The following is a brief update on our progress:

Determine additional training needs on the recent State law changes concerning food temperature.

Status – The Environmental Health, Consultation and Technical Services (CTS) unit convened meetings with a number of community based organizations and professional food service associations within various Asian communities to discuss the concerns and propose action relative to the Board motion. A needs assessment survey instrument was created and distributed to the executive members of each stakeholder organization for their review and comments.

The initial meetings were very successful and well received by the various Asian cuisine stakeholders. To date, CTS has met with representatives from the following organizations: American Chinese Restaurant Association, Los Angeles County Chinese Restaurants Health Standards Task Force, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Chinese American Elected Officials, a Senior Deputy from Supervisor Antonovich's office, Japanese Restaurant Association of Southern California, Economic and Business Affairs Division of Japanese Consul, Japanese Restaurant News, Los Angeles Korean American Restaurant Association, Korean Rice Cake Association, Korean American Grocers Association of California, and a Business counselor from Korean Youth & Community Service Center. CTS is in the process of identifying and contacting stakeholders from the Vietnamese, Thai, and Filipino restaurant communities.

Upon receipt of their input, the survey instrument will be used to determine the specific food safety training and compliance assistance needed for the Asian cuisine operators. Additionally, the survey document will be translated into the language of the participants' choice. Environmental Health staff with bilingual capabilities will be utilized to translate their responses to English in order to complete the assessment.

Additional studies on the safety of traditional cultural food preparation techniques.

Status – The needs assessment survey will also provide feedback from the operators regarding traditional food preparation methods which they believe have been in conflict with established food safety practices or subject to enforcement actions for non compliance with State health codes. Those food preparation methods identified will be subsequently studied and evaluated based on the latest scientific evidence and procedures. These studies will provide a basis in determining the potential for food borne illness.

We will provide another status report in 30 days. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let either of us know.

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c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors