

# Restaurant health checks — fair or foul?

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By KAREN CORNELISON  
Battalion Staff

**WHAT GOES ON** behind the scenes at the restaurants where you eat?

Ruth Maddox is one of the five sanitarians working for the Brazos County Health Department. One of her responsibilities is inspecting restaurants in the Bryan-College Station area and filling out a "report card."

The report card is actually the Texas Department of Health Food Service Establishment Inspection Report. It lists 44 items, weighted from one to five points in importance, which must be evaluated as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A score of 100 is the highest possible.

If, for example, the original container of a food is not properly labeled, one point is subtracted from 100. But if potentially hazardous food is not stored properly, five points are subtracted.

"Hardly anybody gets a perfect score," Maddox said. There are always a few minor things wrong. "These have to be corrected by the time we come back, usually once a month."

MADDOX INSPECTED TWO restaurants April 18, giving neither one a warning. Each inspection took approximately 45 minutes.

Restaurant A had an overall clean appearance. Maddox informed the

manager of her inspection, and began. She opened flour bins, checked meat cutters and can openers for cleanliness, inspected the freezer and refrigerator to see that foods were covered, and even checked the temperatures.

She watched the dishwasher in operation and checked the water with litmus paper for correct pH.

Next Maddox looked at the ovens, stoves and food warmers, also checking the temperatures of the warmed foods, (which must be kept at 140 degrees Fahrenheit). There should be no accumulation of grease which could drip on cooking food, she said.

There must be hot and cold running water in the kitchens and restrooms. Maddox tested each sink, flushed every toilet, and checked for soap, towels and waste receptacles in the restrooms.

WITH A FLASHLIGHT, she looked between boxes and under cabinets. Those are the places where insects and rat droppings are usually found, she said.

Dishes were checked for dust and cracks which are hard to disinfect. Once the inspection was completed, she filled out the form and talked to the assistant manager.

"How did we do?" he asked. "Pretty well," Maddox answered. "You got a 90."

The points subtracted were for relatively minor violations: the handle of the ice scoop was resting on the ice; there was a small leak in the ceiling of the employees restroom; some of the food in the freezer, although wrapped, was resting on the floor rather than on shelves; and one employee was smoking while washing dishes.

Restaurant B was a different story. "THE KITCHEN DIDN'T LOOK or smell clean. Maddox walked in, took one look at a large screen-covered cabinet containing several cuts of cooked meat stored at room temperature, and began writing. The manager interrupted her.

"Let's sit down and talk about this," he said. Maddox reminded him she had complained about the meat storage violation last month,

and it was supposed to have been corrected. "Believe it or not, that cabinet was cleaned this morning," he said. "It tends to get dirty in a hurry when you put four to five hundred pounds of meat in there a day." He explained that he only cooked enough meat for one day, and that all the meat being stored would be served to customers by noon the next day. It's still not acceptable, Maddox said. The manager agreed to call the head sanitarian and work the problem out with him.

"MOST RESTAURANTS ARE COOPERATIVE," Maddox said later. "A few places I don't like because they make excuses. They know what has to be done, they just don't do it."

Maddox took the internal temperature of some potato salad, which was a few degrees too warm. The condiments were sitting at room temperature, and a fly or two could be seen crawling on the onions. Grease was caked on the oven. There were open sacks of onions and potatoes sitting on the floor of the freezer.

Despite these conditions, Restaurant B got a rating of 89 — only one point lower than Restaurant A.

"There are a lot of things bad about the new form we're using," Maddox said. Although there were many instances of improper food storage in Restaurant B's kitchen, it was only docked a few points — the inspectors can take off only once for the same violation.

THE MANAGERS OF THESE two restaurants said they think the health inspections are fair — for the most part.

"It depends on the mood they (the sanitarians) are in," said the assistant manager of Restaurant A. "Sometimes they'll nitpick; sometimes they'll look at things and other times they won't."

"They are fair," Restaurant B's manager said about health inspections. "But sometimes they come at an odd time — like right after lunch. If they came maybe an hour after



Ruth Maddox checks the hot and cold running water in "Restaurant B." Despite what were apparently much more severe violations than "Restaurant A," there was only a difference of one point of 100 possible between the two.

Battalion photo by Karen Corneison

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## Say what? Nuclear safety gobbledygook

United Press International  
WASHINGTON — Listening to Nuclear Regulatory Commission discussions is like trying to follow a United Nations debate without earphones — nothing is in English.

For example, the five safety criteria set by nuclear reactor regulatory chief Harold Denton for the Babcock and Wilcox plants ordered shut down were referred to in formal letters from the utility companies as "items A through E."

What are the safety changes

that must be made, according to the document?

"A) — Reviewing and upgrading, as appropriate, auxiliary feed reliability and performance (timeliness).

"B) — Reviewing results of FMEA analysis of ICS and taking actions, as to reduce its likelihood of initiating or exacerbating transients.

"C) — Hard wiring anticipatory scram based on FW transients.

"D) — Reviewing detailed analyses of plant response to

transients to effects of HPI mitigation, and return to normal circulation cooling.

"E) — Reviewing new augmented standing instructions and emergency procedures for plant operators developed as a result of A-D above.

In English, this means the plants are shut down until they comply with safety recommendations to improve the emergency cooling water systems, modify certain equipment, develop better emergency procedures and improve operator training.

O.K., but if people saw the kind they wouldn't want to eat there.

"I could say yes to that," said staurant A's assistant manager, posting a grade. But he said thought two or three people might inspect the restaurant so that person's bias would not determine the grade.

Restaurant B's manager said "I think it would be fair," he said. "It would make the owner aware if the manager was keeping things in shape, and make the patrons aware, too."



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