Making Safer Local Food Choices During Deployment

1 April 2012
Briefing Outline

PURPOSE: To provide you with the information you need to make safe local food choices during deployment.

• Eating Local:
  – What is it?
  – Why we do it?
  – What are the risks?
• What is foodborne illness?
• How do I reduce my risk of foodborne illness when eating local?
• Always follow command guidance!
What are Local Foods?

Local foods are:

– eaten on the economy
– from sources not approved by U.S. military preventive medicine and veterinary personnel
– found off-Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and on FOBs in host country owned and operated food establishments

Do not assume foods eaten on-FOB are from approved sources.
Why Eat Local?

- Local foods are often eaten as part of elder meetings and other counterinsurgency (COIN) activities during which U.S. forces interact with local populations.
- Eating with local populations can serve as an important part of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.
- It allows for enhanced understanding and learning of customs between U.S. forces and local communities.
- The practice can improve working relationships and trust.
Risks of Eating Local

• Although eating local enables relationship building, it can increase your risk of foodborne illnesses.
  – Those not accustomed to eating local foods may be more susceptible to foodborne illnesses.
  – Local foods do not go through the same approval process by preventive medicine and veterinary personnel as U.S. military provided foods.
  – They are not subjected to the same level of scrutiny to determine their safety.
  – The safety of local foods cannot be guaranteed.
Why is Foodborne Illness a Problem?

• It can greatly impact your mission!
  
  – Gastrointestinal (GI) illness, such as diarrhea, is common among deployed U.S. military personnel\textsuperscript{1,2,3,4}.
  
  – Foodborne illness may be relatively short in duration (hours or days) or severe, long-term or chronic, and even life-threatening.
  
  – The potential for lost duty days, decreased performance, and prolonged illness exists.
Common symptoms of foodborne illness include:
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- fever

Seek medical attention if you experience any of these symptoms.
Reduced the Risk

• Educated choices regarding the types of local food you eat can help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

• Certain foods can carry a higher risk of foodborne illness than others.
Lower Risk Foods:

- Breads

- Fully cooked vegetables, beans and rice that are kept and served hot

- Boiled or well done meats (lamb, beef, poultry and fish) that are eaten within 2 hours after cooking

- Hard-skin fruits and vegetables that you peel yourself (bananas, oranges and limes)

- Hot tea

- Bottled water or canned carbonated drinks that you open yourself
Higher Risk Foods:

- Milk and other dairy products (cheese, ice cream and butter)
- Partially cooked or raw meats or fish
- Raw, leafy vegetables
- Leftovers, take-home, or doggie bags
- Opened/unsealed beverage containers
- Ice, iced drinks, frozen desserts and juices
- Locally canned or packaged products
Always Follow Command Guidance

• Always seek command guidance before eating from sources not approved by U.S. military preventive medicine or veterinary personnel.

• If you have questions about whether or not to eat a particular food, use your chain of command or ask preventive medicine or veterinary personnel.
BE SMART WHEN YOU
EAT LOCAL DURING DEPLOYMENT!

MAN, MY STOMACH IS WRECKED!
WHERE'S THE NEAREST BATHROOM?

GROSS, DUDE! YOU SHOULD'VE
JUST STUCK WITH THE BREAD...

GROSSER TOUGHER

Go to sick call if you
have nausea, vomiting,
diarrhea or fever.

Avoid higher risk foods:
- Milk and dairy products (cheese, milk, cream and butter)
- Partially cooked or raw
  meats or fish
- Frozen, frozen vegetables
- Leftovers, "mystery"
- Opened/unsealed packaging
- Ice cream, milk,
  desserts and juice
- Locally obtained or
  packaged produce

Choose lower risk foods:
- Breads
- Fully cooked
  vegetables, beans and
  rice that are kept and
  refrigerated
- Any foods on well
  served menus
- Breaded (fries),
  poultry and fish that
  are eaten within 2 hours
  after cooking
- Hard-ripe fruits and
  vegetables that you
  peel yourself (bananas,
  oranges, limes)
- Hot tea
- Bottled water or canned
  carbonated drinks that
  you open yourself!

The information does not render command guidance. Always seek command guidance before eating from unapproved sources.
Use Your Resources: Sticker

**COME HERE OFTEN?**
**IT MAY BE WHAT YOU’RE EATING...**

Avoid Higher Risk Foods

- Milk and other dairy products
- Partially cooked or raw meats or fish
- Raw, leafy vegetables
- Leftovers, take-home, or doggie bags
- Opened/unsealed beverage containers
- Ice, iced drinks, frozen desserts and juices
- Locally canned or packaged products

**BE SMART WHEN YOU EAT LOCAL DURING DEPLOYMENT**

Eat SMART, Stay Ready!

http://phc.amedd.army.mil
1-800-222-9698
Distribution Unlimited
TA-163-1011
Use Your Resources: Smart Card

**Use Your Resources: Smart Card**

**Tips for Eating Local**

Don't let food bring you down!

**Risk**

At times, you may need to eat local foods with community leaders and residents. Eating local allows for better understanding and exchange of customs between U.S. forces and local communities. The practice can improve working relationships, trust and morale.

Although eating local may be good for building relationships, it does carry some risk. Those who are not accustomed to local foods may be more likely to get foodborne illnesses. These illnesses may be relatively short in duration (hours or days) or severe, long-term, and even life-threatening. Lost duty days, decreased performance and prolonged illness are possible. In addition, when eating local food, you should be aware that enemy forces could intentionally contaminate or poison food. Maintaining situational awareness is critical.

**Symptoms of Foodborne Illness**

Common symptoms of foodborne illness include:

- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- fever

Seek medical attention if you experience any of these symptoms.

**Local Customs**

Being invited to dine with locals is generally considered an honor and is a powerful way to build trust. Cultural sensitivity and tact are critical. Refusing food can offend partners. Always seek command guidance before dining.
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The USAPHC POCs for this information are:

Army Institute of Public Health Water Supply Management Program
http://phc.amedd.army.mil/organization/institute/dehe/Pages/wsmp.aspx

Army Institute of Public Health Food Protection Program
http://phc.amedd.army.mil/ORGANIZATION/INSTITUTE/DVET/Pages/FoodProtection.aspx

Health Information Operations,
USAPHC-HIOProgram@amedd.army.mil
References


Notes for the Instructor:

- Slide 5: When eating local food, Soldiers should ensure situational awareness and be aware of potential for intentional food contamination and poisoning risks by enemy forces.
- Slide 7: The only way to know for sure if you have a foodborne illness is to see a healthcare provider who can perform diagnostic tests to help identify the cause of your symptoms.
- Slide 9: If you have to eat local, then choose these foods. These are the less risky options!
  - Hard-skin fruits and vegetables include bananas, oranges, and limes. These have to be peeled before eating.
  - Bacteria on the surface of fruits and vegetables can get into the edible parts if it is not washed thoroughly before peeling or slicing.
  - Avoid eating nerve tissue, brain and spinal cord tissue, especially animals like cattle, sheep, antelopes, deer, giraffes, and their relatives.
  - Eat with a knife and fork when possible. This will help to avoid contamination from germs that may reside on your hands or from the things you touch.
  - Examine the food and avoid undercooked portions and unknown entities.
  - Eating boneless meat is safer than meat off the bone. The meat next to the bone should be avoided because it may not be cooked as thoroughly as meat further from the bone.
- Slide 10: If you have to eat local, then avoid these foods. They carry a higher risk of foodborne illness!
  - Bacteria on the surface of fruits and vegetables can get into the edible parts if it is not washed thoroughly before peeling or slicing.
  - Avoid eating nerve tissue, brain and spinal cord tissue, especially animals like cattle, sheep, antelopes, deer, giraffes, and their relatives.
  - Eat with a knife and fork when possible. This will help to avoid contamination from germs that may reside on your hands or from the things you touch.
  - Examine the food and avoid undercooked portions and unknown entities.
  - Eating boneless meat is safer than meat off the bone. The meat next to the bone should be avoided because it may not be cooked as thoroughly as meat further from the bone.
- Slide 12: You may see this poster displayed in locations such as common living areas, barracks, restroom facilities, and health clinics.
- Slide 13: You may see these stickers posted in restroom facilities (on the interior walls of latrines or bathroom stall doors, bathroom mirrors, doorways to the restroom facilities, etc.) on the installation.
- Slide 14: Hand each Soldier a Pocket Card to read and reference.