



Re: Guidance Document for a Model Wild-harvested Mushroom Program

A primary line of defense in ensuring that food meets the requirements is to obtain food from approved sources. It is also critical to monitor food products to ensure that, after harvesting and processing, they do not fall victim to conditions that endanger their safety, make them adulterated, or compromise their honest presentation. The provisions of Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER), 25 TAC §228.62 (f) are clear that wild-harvested mushrooms may only be considered an approved source if the regulatory authority has approved them under its regulations. The FDA 2013 Food Code Annex clarifies that a regulatory authority may establish its approval process by applying its own laws and policies and states that regulatory authorities have flexibility in establishing its approval process.

The Annex recommends a regulatory authority consider the following elements when developing wild-harvested mushroom regulations:

1. Resources & criteria to select wild mushroom species for service or sale;
2. Record-keeping and traceability to assure safety of wild-harvested mushrooms;
3. Written buyer specifications that include:
 - a. Identification by the scientific name and the common name of the mushroom species;
 - b. A statement that the mushroom was identified while in the fresh state;
 - c. The name and contact information of the person who identified the mushroom and the mushroom seller; and
 - d. A statement as to the qualifications and training of the identifier, specifically related to mushroom identification.

Definition

For the purpose of this document, a Wild-harvested Mushroom means a fresh mushroom that has been picked in the wild and has not been processed (e.g., dried). A Wild-harvested Mushroom does not include mushrooms that have been packaged in an approved food processing plant or cultivated mushrooms.

Wild-harvested Mushroom Approval Language

In addition to parameters established by a regulatory authority through regulation, a regulatory authority should require the food establishment provide to the regulatory authority a one-time notification for approval prior to use or sales.

Wild-harvested Mushroom Selection Criteria and Resources

Regulatory authorities may specify criteria to establish a list of approved of wild harvested mushroom species that may be considered an approved source. Criteria may include mushrooms that are:

- already in commerce according to foragers, chefs and dealers in the jurisdiction;
- easily identified with field characteristics as determined by the jurisdiction;
- common, in a specific jurisdiction as determined by a committee;
- generally considered a low allergic reaction risk as determined by a committee; or
- approved for sale in other states.

Record-Keeping and Traceability

To facilitate trace back and foodborne illness investigation, the regulatory authority should consider regulatory language that outlines appropriate record-keeping at the food establishment. The regulatory authority should develop elements record-keeping documents (e.g., a tag or label), taking into consideration factors unique to each local or regional jurisdiction, and should specify records retention. If the regulatory authority requires that wild-harvested mushrooms be accompanied by a record, the wild harvested mushroom records should remain attached to the container in which the wild harvested mushrooms are received and stored until the container is empty.

The records may include the following information:

- Approved identifier name;
- Address & phone number;
- Latin binomial name and locally used common name of the mushroom;
- Harvest date;
- Harvest location (e.g., town, county, township, etc.);
- Harvest weight; and
- Name of forager, if not harvested by an approved identifier.

Commingling of wild harvested mushroom lots is not recommended as it serves to confound trace back or foodborne illness investigations and could hinder efforts to remove implicated product from the food chain. The records should be retained for at least 90 days from the date the container is emptied. This retention period account for potentially long asymptomatic latent periods (that can be up to 14 days from consumption), diagnosis and investigation timeframes that can be up to 3 weeks, and already existing records retention timeframes specified in the TFER for other foods.

Written Buyer Specifications

In addition to records that should be kept with the wild-harvested mushrooms at receipt and during storage to facilitate trace back and foodborne illness investigation, the food establishment should keep a written buyer specification, which should remain on file in the food establishment for at least 90 days from the date of sale or service. This written specification should include:

- Identification by the scientific name and the common name of the mushroom species;
- A statement that the mushroom was identified while in the fresh state;
- The name and contact information of the person who identified the mushroom and the mushroom seller; and
- A statement as to the qualifications and training of the identifier, specifically related to mushroom identification.

Consumer Notification

If the regulatory authority requires that a food establishment only receive wild-harvested mushrooms that have been identified by a person who is certified or has received training required by the regulatory authority and the food establishment maintains records and buyer specifications, then requiring a consumer advisory is not necessary. However, if the regulatory authority does not require certification or training or the approval process does not include recommended elements outlined in this document, then the regulatory authority should specify that approval means that a food establishment that sells, uses or serves mushrooms picked in the wild shall ensure the mushrooms are conspicuously identified by a label, placard, or menu notation that states:

- The common and usual name of the mushroom; and
- The statement "Wild-harvested mushrooms: not an inspected product and is harvested from a non-inspected site."

Regulatory Requirements

Cite the regulatory requirements in the local jurisdiction for wild mushroom harvesting location and distribution.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to the training or certification required for wild-harvested mushroom identification, food worker training should be required if it is available. Although not a public health issue, a jurisdiction is encouraged to include the topic of harvest methods for species conservation in the training or certification program.