

What's That On Your Plate?

Broadside Goes to the Source to See How Fairfax Rates

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From the prep cook who urinated in the kitchen sink to the pimple popping pizza maker, inspection reports often turn up interesting, if not disgusting, facts about restaurants that can make even the hardest consumer think twice about their restaurant choice.

A *Broadside* analysis of the past year's

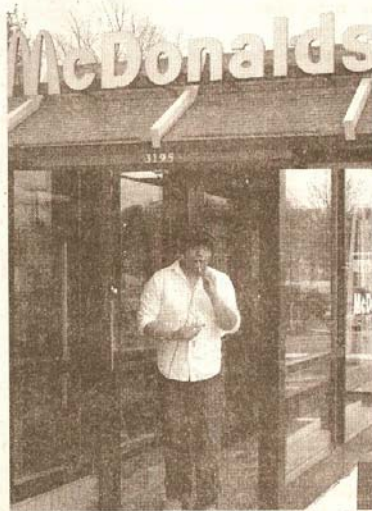


Photo By |JNaomi Phelps

Your local McDonald's and other guilty fast-food pleasures may be more unsafe than you realize.

inspection reports for popular Fairfax City restaurants showed that while local restaurants fared relatively well compared to other restaurants across the nation, there were still some troubling findings.

The Subway at 10407 Main St. was cited last year for incorrect pest control methods and an inspector observed a live roach in the facility. The inspector also observed an employee eat a meal with gloved hands, then return to work without changing gloves. The manager of the store declined to comment.

Pizza Hut at 11044 Lee Hwy had the highest amount of critical violations in the study with three critical violations in their Dec. 19 inspection and six in their Jan. 24 inspection.

Although the McDonald's at 3195 Old Lee Hwy had less critical violations than both Subway and Pizza Hut, an inspector still cited the store for, "an abundance of flies and fruit flies."

Van Management, the owners of the McDonald's, maintain that they have a strong commitment to food quality and safety. "The specific issues that were raised in the August 2006 Health Department report were corrected immediately," Van Management told *Broadside* in an official statement.

Burger King at 10885 Lee Hwy was the best of the bunch with only one critical violation in the past year.

Overall, most of the restaurants in the study averaged between zero and two critical violations per inspection. Critical violations are, "violations of the Food Regulations, which, if left uncorrected, are more likely than other violations to directly contribute to food contamination, illness, or environmental degradation," according to the Virginia Department of Health. "Such

problems can create environments that cause bacteria to grow and thrive, which puts the consumer at risk for food-borne illness."

The most commonly cited violations from the study concerned improper food temperatures, unclean cooking utensils and not washing hands. Of the 15 restaurants in the study, over 26 percent had hand washing violations within the past year.

Health officials in Indianapolis have been emphasizing the importance of proper hand washing since a vomiting virus, traced to an Olive Garden outside Indiana, affected 372 people late last year. The virus was identified as Norovirus and resulted in hospitalization for some diners while others suffered from vomiting, diarrhea and fever.

Kimberly Cordero of the Fairfax County Health Department said the role of health inspectors is to educate and teach restaurant workers. However, due to the restaurant industry's high worker turnover and lower levels of education, this can sometimes be challenging.

"The safety of the people who eat in these restaurants, that's our number one concern," said Cordero.

Fast food restaurants in general have fewer health violations because of national training programs, according to Cordero. These restaurants also have a reputation to uphold and more to lose, she said.

The specific restaurants for the study were drawn from the list of top 10 chain restaurants in the U.S. by sales, according to Technomic Information Services Inc.

Check out the next issue of Broadside to see how Mason's eating facilities measure up in health inspections