



**AZIENDA U.S.L. (Local  
Health Authority)**  
**CITY OF BOLOGNA**

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PREVENTION DEPARTMENT  
FOOD AND NUTRITION HYGIENE DEPARTMENT  
FOOD AND BEVERAGE SECTION  
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Reg. no a 5737/00

Bologna, 15/05/00

**REPORT ON THE EQUIPMENT FOR PRODUCING PASTA  
DISHES CALLED "PASTAchef"**

Given that the company EUROCHEF – Catering machines, Viale delle Nazioni 101 Modena, with request dated 28/04/00 and subsequent additional documentation, submitted an apparatus called "PASTAchef", to be used for the automatic production of dishes of dry pasta, to this Prevention Department for a health and hygiene evaluation, the following actions have been carried out:

- tests on the machine's operation and the raw materials, through an inspection performed on 13/04/00 at a public establishment already in possession of a health permit issued by the City of Bologna for bars with toilet, where this equipment was installed on an experimental basis;
- health and hygiene evaluation of the equipment, the raw materials used and any potential hygiene risks;
- acquisition of the certification documents concerning materials coming into contact with food in accordance with applicable regulations;
- assessment of the types of establishment for which the equipment's installation may be compatible with the limitations envisaged by the health authorisation.

## OPERATING PROCEDURES AND RAW MATERIALS USED

On the basis of the survey carried out and the documentation gathered, it has been possible to check that the PASTAchef apparatus works by using the following raw materials:

- pre-cooked frozen pasta in single-use packets (i.e. a sufficient amount for a single portion of product ready for consumption);
- industrially produced sauces to be added at the moment, immediately after preparing the pasta.

Finally, the machine uses water, destined to reach about 96° - 97° during its operation, fed via a connection to the water mains or to a 4.5 litre tank.

The apparatus has the approximate dimensions of a cube, about cm. 50-60 per side (precisely it is cm. 55 wide, 48 deep and 62 high) and is built entirely in stainless steel with two internal baskets which work autonomously and are intended for the single pasta portions, protected by a transparent door in order to be in direct contact with the outside only whilst introducing the pasta.

To run it, a preliminary water heating phase is necessary, which, if the connection with the water supply is direct, occurs simply by turning the machine on and waiting that the "wait" standby indicator should switch off, thereby indicating that the water has reached the necessary temperature.

Subsequently, the single portion of pasta is introduced into one of the baskets which, once the timer has been set (time and temperature may be viewed in the specific display), plunges automatically through special hoppers into the boiling water for a programmable time (usually 60 seconds), then it is tipped into a container to be placed in the lower part of the machine, ready for being served; inside the machine the pasta does not therefore come into contact with any material or gears which may cause the transfer of foreign substances.

Since the equipment is perfectly sealed and provided with a water vapour condensation system which empties into a tray underneath, outside the machine, the production cycle takes place with almost no steam or smells which in fact were not minimally perceived during the test performed on the spot.

Therefore, our opinion is that the machine, if properly managed and using the raw materials provided for this purpose, does not need any extractor fan system connected to a ventilation flue.

The final preparation phase consists in adding the sauce; all the sauces are also industrially produced and are heated and kept at a constant temperature (between 65° and 80°) in specific stainless steel containers, equipped with a tight-seal lid positioned on the upper side of the device. The heating is carried out, in this case, on a hot plate heated by a controlled thermostat.

As regards the cleaning operations, when turning off the machine, or in any case at the end of the day, all the metal parts which come into contact with food (baskets, sauce trays, which may be easily removed and placed in the dishwasher) or with the cooking water, must be thoroughly cleaned, even with common detergents, followed by a thorough rinsing and drying.

The condensation drip tray, placed under the device, which is an easily removed drawer, must be periodically emptied and placed back again.

## HEALTH AND HYGIENE ASSESSMENT

On the basis of the documentation submitted and of the assessments conducted on site during the demonstration, the equipment appeared able, when correctly placed and properly handled in accordance with instructions, to provide a product with almost no health risk.

However, given the potential dissemination and the different places it may be positioned and the staff professionalism in the single establishment, it would be appropriate to also extend the evaluation to those implications which, with sufficient manual dexterity and knowledge of hygienic regulations, should not in theory occur.

As concerns the pasta, since it is a pre-cooked frozen food, and, by its very nature and composition, almost inert as a substrate for bacterial growth, we are of the opinion that it is unlikely to constitute a risk from a health and hygiene point of view, even in the case of a not completely correct management by the operator.

The same concept also seems to apply to the water, especially if the equipment is installed directly connected to the water mains, without therefore using a tank which could facilitate its prolonged stagnation; it should also be considered that, if the inner tank were to be used, both the periodic maintenance operations, and the daily filling, according to the instructions and the inspection carried out on the spot, can be rather complicated, such as to determine, in the case of an inadequate

management of the device, some potential risk of contamination, although it should largely downsize during the heating phase at 96°.

It therefore appears legitimate to attribute the higher hygienic risk to handling the sauces, as these, although falling within the category of industrially produced preserved food and which should therefore represent a low hygienic risk when in the original packaging thanks to the heat treatment undergone during the manufacturing phases, have two important aspects as regards this investigation:

- a great number contains ingredients with a potential risk of perishability and bacterial growth (meat, fish, eggs, cheese, etc.).
- they are not packaged in single portions and thus cannot be used exclusively for individual preparations;

It follows that the possible risk associated with inappropriate handling of the sauces by the operator can be traced back to their prolonged storage, after opening the pack, in a non-protected place or to a continuous transfer from the package to the sauce heater, carried out in an unhygienic manner.

In order to prevent or at least to minimise this possibility, on the basis of the range of brochures submitted, which clearly states that most sauces are packaged in sizes from 360 to 850 g. with a few above 1 kg, we recommend the use of sauces in small packages which in any case must not exceed the 1 kg. capacity.

Moreover, during the activity, it will be necessary to avoid mixing the contents of a new sauce pack with the leftovers of the previous one; before placing the new package, the tray should be cleaned thoroughly with food grade paper or other suitable measures in order to remove any sauce residue. Whatever the container's capacity, at the end of the day all the open sauce packets containing perishable ingredients (meat, fish, eggs, cheese) must be eliminated. Then, as mentioned above, the sauce-holder trays must be washed, rinsed and dried.

## MATERIALS USED

All the documents certifying the compliance of the PASTAchef materials and surfaces, mostly built in stainless steel, with regulations concerning Food Contact Materials, have been viewed.

## TYPES OF ESTABLISHMENTS ALLOCATED A COMPATIBLE PERMIT WITH THE EQUIPMENT

It is first necessary to point out that although there is little food handling involved, the PASTAchef machine does not fall within the legislation envisaged by Article 32 of Presidential Decree 327/80 which concerns Automatic Vending Machines (whose installation is subject to a simple communication to the Supervisory Authority, regardless of the establishment where it is installed).

In the opinion of this Department of Prevention, the use of the equipment in question is subject to Sanitary Authorisation and, according to current standards, and in particular to the Declaration concerning establishments within the City of Bologna, should be considered as compatible with the following types of establishments:

1. traditional restaurants, fast-food and self-service establishments;
2. canteens with kitchens;
3. takeaways and soup production laboratories: (sold only to take away without administration)
4. bars belonging to the categories identified by Municipal Resolution 453/94, which allows the preparation and administration of soups in frozen single portions with or without extension to the administration of salads (Categories B3 and B2b);

In this regard, it should be noted that frozen precooked pasta is declared edible after thawing and therefore ready-to-use after heating, as it is a processing procedure, similar to that already envisaged for frozen single portion soups, which lies outside standard cooking and as is known, is excluded for category B establishments.

Within the establishments listed above, the installation of the PASTAchef machine does not give rise to an increase of foods which may be prepared and administered: therefore, there are not sufficient grounds for a mandatory application request for a Sanitary Authorisation in accordance with art. 25 of Presidential Decree 327/80, but rather for a notification, pursuant to art. 27 of the same Decree, of a modification of the establishment's facilities and organisation.

In other cases (such as canteens without kitchens, running and authorised as a self-service terminal), the presence of the equipment requires a specific Authorisation request.

In addition to what has been specified in relation to the machine's specific aspects, the necessary hygienic requirements are:

- general structural requirements for specific types of establishment, according to the regulations currently in force;

- specific requirements concerning positioning the machine and its accessories in suitable spaces with appropriate routes, such as not to interfere with other functions from a hygienic standpoint. Should the equipment be positioned in view of the customer, a location which could allow any possible direct contact with the public must be avoided; the PASTAchef machine therefore cannot be installed on the counter that faces the customer, but, for example, on a counter located to the side or behind the shoulders of the person in charge.
- other additional requirements (sink, freezer, tools, etc.) which must comply with those already envisaged for the establishments included in the above mentioned categories.

## CONCLUSIONS

We hereby express our favourable opinion to the adoption of the PASTAchef machine at the following conditions:

- that it is used only with the raw materials consisting of SINGLE PORTION PRE-COOKED FROZEN PASTA and INDUSTRIALLY PRODUCED SAUCES IN PACKAGES NOT EXCEEDING 1 KG;
- that the sauce should be poured into trays using the appropriate tools and that the sauce packets with perishable ingredients once opened and started must be eliminated at the end of the working day; it is also necessary to avoid mixing the contents of a new sauce pack with the residue of the previous one;
- that the preparation should only take place at the customer's request in a swift manner, with the prohibition to carry out any prior preparation of soups to be kept ready in fridge counters;
- that the equipment should be installed with a direct connection to the water mains with a non-return valve, without the use of a tank;
- that it should undergo the necessary cleaning, washing and maintenance;
- that it should only be installed at establishments belonging to the above categories, after giving prior notice or applying for the Sanitary Authorisation and that it should be placed in an appropriate hygienic location inside the establishment.
- that the machine should not have been tampered with in relation to its original characteristics.

The Head of the Department

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The Service Manager

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