

Pitt County Restaurant Sanitation Scores: the Good, the Bad and the Inedible

By Rich Ohlson
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Greenville, Sept 18 - Imagine your favorite restaurant and the delicious food it serves that you crave every day. Now imagine that food you love so much being cooked in a kitchen infested with bugs. That image might be reality if your favorite restaurant is Sue's Country Kitchen in Pitt County.

Like Sue's Country Kitchen, all restaurants in North Carolina go through a thorough inspection process based on cleanliness, appropriate food storage, and food handling practices. Based on the results, the establishment receives a score that must be posted in view to all customers.

According to Anne Clark, environmental health specialist for Pitt County, until recently all restaurants in the area were inspected quarterly. These inspections are random, she said, so the restaurant manager does not know exactly what day the health specialist will come. However, Brandon Long, an employee at Logan's Roadhouse, says, "Our managers know around the time we will have an inspection, so we do a little extra cleaning for a while until the inspector comes."

It appears that some establishments, even Logan's, do not do enough to earn good scores on their inspections. Logan's scores have averaged just 89 out of 100 over the past three years, and was among the lowest in Pitt County. According to the Restaurant Sanitation Ratings on the Pitt County Government Web site, Logan's often loses points due to dirty dishes and equipment.

Matt Leggett, a server at Logan's, says, "Our dishwasher is always breaking or the hot water isn't working, so it's hard to get the dishes clean like they should be."

Nick Broadie, kitchen manager at Logan's, said future scores will be higher. "Our most recent inspection scores have gone up. We recently replaced the dishwasher and made other improvements around the restaurant." He jokingly mentioned that the restaurant has replaced a couple of managers as well.

In all, an analysis of three years of Pitt County restaurant sanitation inspection scores from 2004-2007 found Sue's Country Kitchen averages a score of just 88.3 over the past three years. The sanitation Web site mentions that the restaurant has a bug problem and stores some food at room temperature, making it potentially hazardous.

Other establishments with low sanitation score averages over the past three years include River Road Diner (89), where live roaches were found around the entire restaurant, Pizza Hut of Farmville (89.7), Lou's Beach Bingo (88), Kentucky Fried Chicken #2 (89.4), and

Boli's Pizza (89.6), which received an 81.5 in its most recent inspection. Restaurant licenses are revoked if they receive a sanitation grade score below 70.

At the other end of the spectrum, establishments with the best average sanitation scores over the past three years include Courtyard Café (101), Dunkin Donuts (101.3), Sheetz 391 (101.3), and all Taco Bells in Pitt County, each of which averaged over 100 points.

Pitt County's Department of Environmental Health recently changed its inspection process so that higher risk businesses will be inspected more often than lower risk businesses.

For more information you can contact Pitt County Environmental Health at (252) 902-3206 or visit the Pitt County Government Website at <http://www.co.pitt.nc.us>.