

Facebook Food Follies

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As the Director of Environmental Health for Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH), I am tasked with trying to make sure that the food that you, the public, eat is safe. The biggest way that I do this is by licensing food establishments that sell and/or prepare the foods that you eat.

I am reaching out to you to ask for your help with my task. Every day, on social media, people are selling food illegally that could make you sick.

Popular items sold include calzones, carnitas, papusas, and tamales. These items require time/temperature control for safety (TCS). I need your help spreading the word to people that are selling these types of food on social media that they need to stop because they don't have a food establishment license and are putting people at risk.

One reason for my concern is that when someone who is illegally selling food hasn't demonstrated knowledge of food safety practices, the food that they have prepared may make you very sick. How??? Because the illegal vendor may not be practicing basic safety precautions such as washing hands, taking temperatures, or cleaning food preparation surfaces. By not doing these things, pathogens or toxins can grow or form in the foods they prepare and then sell to you.



Another reason for my concern is that the people selling food illegally on social media are taking business and profit away from licensed food establishments. Licensed food establishments must pay an annual fee to operate and receive an annual inspection where they demonstrate their knowledge of food safety.

When we come across a post on social media, we make every attempt to contact the people selling their food items illegally and help them to do it in a safe manner. Unfortunately, at times, our attempts to contact them are either ignored or blocked. These actions show a blatant disregard for the public's safety.

So, please, help me keep you safe. First, think twice before you buy food sold on social media. Second, ask the vendor for proof that their food business has a current license (issued for the current year) by EIPH. This is not to be confused with a food handler's permit. Third, call EIPH and ask if the business is a licensed food establishment. That number is 208-523-5382.

Thank you for your efforts to help us keep the community safe from foodborne illnesses.