

MN 2000
CRB- 7/29/77

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE - UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA •

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consumer radio briefs

July 29, 1977

Botulism Case

(1:40)

Improperly home canned foods usually are the culprits in outbreaks of deadly botulism food poisoning, but a recent case in California proves that other dangerous food handling methods can cause it, too.

Minnesota Extension Food Specialist Isabel Wolf says a frozen meat pot pie kept for 20 hours in an oven with a pilot light put a teenaged boy in the hospital with botulism food poisoning.

The fault was not with the frozen pies as they came from the food processor. Tests on other pies of the same brand proved them safe. The pot pie spoiled because of the way it was handled in the boy's home. A sister had planned to eat it and had baked it as directed for about 20 minutes. Then when she decided to eat something else, she turned off the oven but left the pie inside. It stayed in the oven overnight before the boy decided to eat it without heating it further.

Mrs. Wolf says the oven, warmed slightly by the pilot light, kept the pie at an incubator temperature that was ideal for the growth of Clostridium botulinum. She says the incident should point out the need for safe handling of any kind of perishable food.

She points out that the boy stricken with the botulism poisoning ate only a few bites of the pot pie because it did not taste right. His father smelled the pie, noticed an off odor, and suggested discarding it. Mrs. Wolf says that any food that smells bad or has an odd flavor should not be eaten. Discard it somewhere that children and pets can not eat it.

She reminds consumers that frozen foods such as pot pies should be heated as the package instructions say, and then they should be consumed shortly afterwards. If not eaten after heating, they should be refrigerated and reheated thoroughly before consumption.

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