

Good afternoon, all.

It has come to the attention of the Pequannock Health Department that some people have decided to show their deep gratitude for the great work healthcare facilities and first responder organizations are doing to combat the coronavirus by donating home prepared foods. In certain instances, people are using social media to organize food drives that encourage home cooked meals and baked goods which, in turn, are then delivered to our healthcare workers and first responders. While this is a well-meaning and noble gesture, the department has to advise against accepting these home prepared foods.

Sanitary conditions inside homes are unknown and foods might be prepared by those who lack food safety knowledge. Adulterated or contaminated ingredients could be used. Foods might be exposed to cross-contamination hazards, temperature abuses, infestation and/or other unsanitary conditions. While any food safety risks that might be posed by this activity would be inadvertent, there are others who might take advantage of the crisis to deliberately cause harm. Therefore, the Health Department strongly recommends that these home baked or prepared foods not be accepted from donors.

Obviously, foods donated that have been prepared and delivered by licensed, retail food establishments are perfectly fine. When approached, it might be a good opportunity to direct a disappointed donor to other activities, goods or services that do not pose a risk and are helpful to your organizations.

Please disseminate this advisory to those within your organizations that you deem necessary. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for all of your great efforts during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Thomas Cantisano
Health Office
Pequannock Township Health Department

