
Food Safety Notice

March 1997

PACKAGING OF HARD-CRUSTED LOAVES AND ROLLS

Food packaging has several important functions. First and foremost it serves as a container, protecting food from contamination and abuse. Secondly, packaging serves to inform consumers about what the food is, what it is made of, its nutritional value, and how much is in the package. Packaging may also serve as a marketing tool, conveying to consumers the special qualities of the food and providing incentives to make a purchase.

Consumers expect and deserve food which is free from contamination, no matter where it may occur. Most ready-to-eat food is protected by a wrapper or container which remains closed until opened by the purchaser. An exception to this rule is French-style, hard-crustured loaves of bread and rolls. These products rely on exposure to air to maintain their dry, crusty texture and character. It has been traditional to package these bakery products unsealed, in open-end bags.

However, these ready-to-eat foods are exposed to avenues of contamination such as dirty hands and unsanitary contact surfaces not present for fully wrapped foods. This is especially true when these goods are sold from self-service shelves or racks. Therefore, the California Uniform Retail Food Facilities Law specifically allows French style, hearth-baked, or hard-crustured loaves and rolls to be in open-end bags, but fully covered within the bag¹.

Bakeries and retailers which market their French style breads in short bags, or expose portions of the bread for consumer appeal are in violation of the law, but more importantly, they risk adulteration of their products.

For more information contact the Department of Health Services, Food and Drug Branch at (916) 445-2263 or your local environmental health agency.

¹ California Health and Safety Code Section 114015. (27604)...

(b) ... French style, hearth-baked, or hard-crustured loaves and rolls shall be considered properly wrapped *if contained in an open-end bag of sufficient size to enclose the loaves or rolls.* (Emphasis added)