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ScienceDirect
Food Chemistry 106 (2008) 751
Food Chemistry
www.elsevier.com/locate/foodchem

Book review

Listeria: A Practical Approach to the Organism and Its Control in Foods, second ed., Chris Bell, Alec Kyriakides (2005). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 296 pages, Binding Paperback, Price £41.99, ISBN: 1405106182

Listeria monocytogenes is an important foodborne pathogen, despite the relative low number of reported cases, because the mortality rate among those affected is high. In the mid 1980, the organism received widespread publicity in the international media following a number of large outbreaks associated with coleslaw, pate, soft cheese and other ready-to-eat foods. In recent years there has been a renewal of interest because outbreaks have been linked to foods not normally associated with *L. monocytogenes*, such as butter; and because of the continuing debate about appropriate microbiological criteria to adopt for *L. monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods.

This book is a part of the excellent *Practical Food Microbiology* Series designed to give the reader reliable and practical information about the major food poisoning organisms. The second edition of the book on *Listeria* has been fully revised and updated to take account of recent advances in taxonomy and legislation and includes new information from recent large outbreaks. An introductory chapter provides background information on the taxonomy, disease characteristics and epidemiological sources of *Listeria*. Subsequent chapters cover lessons to be learned from outbreaks, factors affecting growth and survival, control in different types of product within the food industry, microbiological criteria and legislative aspects, and detection methods.

This book contains a mine of detailed information about outbreaks probably not available anywhere else. The theoretical ability of an organism to grow in food and cause illness is governed by its basic biology and growth and survival characteristics. The great merit of this book is that it brings to life, by way of practical examples, how this theoretical possibility can become reality by a combination of particular circumstances during food manufacture distribution and retail. The analyses of the factors leading to outbreaks are highly informative and have the authority and conviction borne of the authors' considerable experience in the food industry. The style is clear and easy to read and there is a very good list of references to original source material. This book is an excellent overview of *L. monocytogenes*, its biology and importance as a foodborne pathogen. I believe it will be an invaluable source of information to all those concerned with the production of safe foods whether in industry, the health sector or higher education.

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doi:10.1016/j.foodchem.2007.06.002