

# Donair

continued from / A1

every corner, right?" said Susan Mader Zinck, a spokeswoman for the provincial Agriculture Department, which employs Nova Scotia's food inspectors.

At Pizza Corner in Halifax on Tuesday, Neil Terry said he's been cutting back on his donair intake since last winter.

"Once upon a time, I ate them maybe like every two weeks, and that was on Saturday nights going out with friends," said Mr. Terry, who works at a nearby bookstore.

"But after a while, we all realized that it was kind of a big mistake. We always regretted it the next day."

Those donair-eating sessions didn't always come after nights of drinking alcohol, he said.

"You cannot drink anything at all, have a donair, and you still feel like you're hungover, in a way."

Health-wise, the 26-year-old Lower Sackville resident said eating donairs does not make him feel good.

"At times it would make you feel borderline sick. It all depends on where it came from," Mr. Terry said. "Some meat was better than others."

He was pleased to learn regu-



Johnathon Stevenson slices donair meat at Tony's Donair in Halifax.

(ERIC WYNNE / Staff)

lators are studying food-safety rules for donair makers.

"You have a large slab of meat on a spit or a stick that they're slicing off," Mr. Terry said. "If you were to ask anybody what the meat actually consists of, some people might be at a loss to tell you whether it's actually beef or lamb or a combination of stuff."

While it's not mandatory, food inspectors in Nova Scotia now recommend that donair shop employees heat the meat on a grill after carving it off the cone.

"I don't see that as being that much of an inconvenience," Mr. Terry said. "It kind of ensures

that your donair is actually going to be hot when you eat it and not kind of lukewarm meat. So at least that's a bonus."

Officials haven't linked any local cases of E. coli 0157 to donairs, said Alain Desroches, a spokesman for Canada's Public Health Agency.

"The three outbreaks were in Alberta, so we're not aware here at the federal level of any E. coli outbreaks associated with donairs in Halifax or in Nova Scotia," Mr. Desroches said.

Bash Toulany has been making and selling donairs at his self-named Duffus Street shop for three decades.

"There's nothing wrong with donairs," Mr. Toulany said. "My dad, he's 93 years old, and every now and then he likes to have a donair, and he's had them many times."

Dave Baddour, manager of Tony's Donair & Pizza on Robie Street, said he eats donairs regularly.

"I have four children and they eat them, too," Mr. Baddour said. "If they're not safe, I don't think I could let my kids eat them."

At Tony's, which has also been in business more than 30 years, servers will throw donair meat on the grill if customers want it well done, he said.

High-quality donair cooking machines can heat up to 260 C, Mr. Baddour said.

"The health inspector, when he comes in here, is always checking the heat that transfers from the machine to the meat (to make sure) it's up to their standards."

At first, he questioned the need for studying the way donairs are made.

"If something is not broken, why do you need to fix it?" he said. "For the last 30 years, nobody came back and said, 'My God, I got sick from your donair' or 'I got sick from eating your donair.' Obviously we're doing something right. Nobody's complained. And, you know, with stuff like that, a lot of people complain about it very, very quick."

But later in the interview, Mr. Baddour said he's glad donairs are under the microscope.

"Probably there's a few things we don't even know about," he said.

The donair working group, which is also looking into similar products including gyros, kebabs and shawarmas, is expected to release a report early next year with safety recommendations.

"The provinces and territories do have their own (regulations) on this, but what we're trying to do is get a more comprehensive set of guidelines that everybody can use," Mr. Duchesne said.

Alberta has been a breeding ground for donair-related E. coli 0157 outbreaks. Last year, there were 12 lab-confirmed cases in Edmonton during a hockey tournament.

E. coli 0157 is the dangerous organism that was found in tainted water that killed seven people and sickened thousands in Walkerton, Ont., in May 2000.

"Some don't get sick at all, others feel as though they have a bad case of the flu with symptoms ranging from severe stomach cramps to vomiting, fever and watery or bloody diarrhea," Mr. Duchesne said.

"These symptoms usually occur within two to 10 days after contact with the bacteria and clear up within seven to 10 days."

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