

K-State doctoral graduate examines food bioterrorism for dissertation

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According to recent news reports, the next venue for a terror threat may involve the use of bio-agents to contaminate the food supplies of U.S. hotels and restaurants.

Dave Olds, a December 2010 doctoral graduate in hotel, restaurant, institution management and dietetics from Kansas State University, conducted his dissertation on [food security](#) and bioterrorism. His dissertation, "Food Defense [Management Practices](#) In Private Country Clubs," examined current safety precautions used by country club restaurants to protect food and beverages, as well as how often those practices were put into effect.

"I identified country clubs because they typically have an exclusive population. They are places often visited by affluent and influential people and their families, and sometimes even government officials," Olds said.

Other national studies on this venue have not been done, Olds said. The idea came from a former K-State study that investigated food bioterrorism in schools and hospitals.

To gather data, Olds, a former chef, surveyed country club managers nationally. In the Midwest he toured the facilities of 25 country clubs and visited with club managers.

"I found that intentional contamination of food isn't perceived to be a

very common occurrence by club managers. In fact, most couldn't recollect an incident happening," Olds said. "However, it's one of the oldest forms of terrorism, as there are recorded incidents of this happening in Roman history."

Olds found that 21 of the 25 club managers said they didn't think [bioterrorism](#) was a risk at their country clubs.

Intentional food contamination can come from two groups: those working inside an operation and those working outside an operation. According to Olds, club managers felt that disgruntled employees were more likely than non-employees to intentionally contaminate food.

An incident of this nature occurred in 2009 at a Kansas City restaurant, rather than a country club, when it was discovered that a former employee had mixed pesticide into salsa, Olds said.

"One of the quotes in a recent news report on food contamination by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula said that this is a difficult topic to debate without alarming the public. I think that's very true," Olds said. "It's really tricky because you want to educate employees and the board of directors, but you don't want to appear to be causing undo panic or even giving people ideas."

More information: A sidebar with low-cost tips for country club managers can be found at www.k-state.edu/media/newsreleases/sidebars/ismsidebar10411.html

Provided by Kansas State University

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