

Tighter food service rules account for ethnic cuisine

Star-Bulletin staff

Improvements in the way food is served and the way permits are processed are now in effect, the state says.

"The new rules are a major step forward in ensuring the safety of food served at Hawaii restaurants and other food vendors," said Bruce Anderson, environmental health director of the state Department of Health.

The tightened sanitation rules take into account ethnic diversity, he said. "In recognition of the unique ethnic cuisine of Hawaii, they allow . . . flexibility in the displaying and serving of foods."

Food establishments now may

display and serve food at "room temperature," 45 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit, for up to four hours. Labels will be required to show the date and time the food must be served by. Unmarked foods or foods with expired time limits must be discarded.

A waiver provision allows restaurants to cook and serve food out of doors as long as food safety requirements are met. "This will allow people going to restaurants to eat food prepared outside if they choose," Anderson said. Another new provision is that all food establishments must renew permits every two years, with new renewal fees ranging set at \$25 for temporary permits and \$45-\$265 for permanent ones.