

DAIRY FOOD SAFETY RECALLS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA: 2022 IN REVIEW

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Compared to other food and beverage products, dairy foods have a good track record of food safety. Along with pasteurization, the fermentation process, water activity, acidity and salt levels in many dairy foods can help protect against pathogens. In addition, the dairy industry works hard to maintain the quality and integrity of its products. Of course, the industry needs to stay alert and continue to get better.

The purpose of this article is to give insight to the dairy industry on what we need to better prepare for the future from a food safety perspective. Recall review is an important and routine task to complete on annual basis with your food safety team when conducting HACCP/ food safety plan validations.

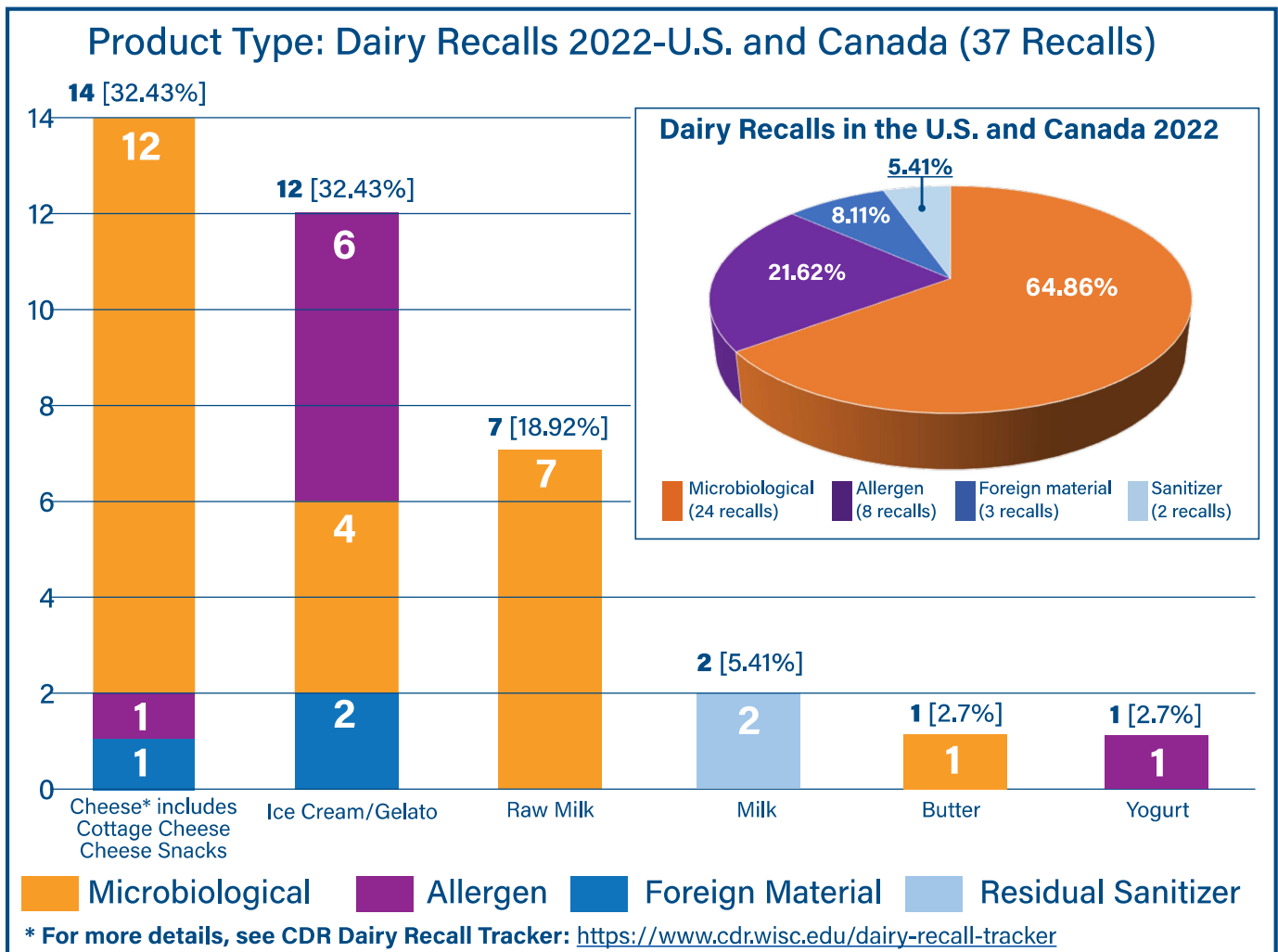
A Look at the 2022 Dairy Processing Recalls

There were approximately 37 recalls in dairy for the United States and Canada last year. The top dairy products recalled were cheese and ice cream.

Out of the approximate 37 recalls in 2022 for dairy in the United States and Canada, ~65% (24) of the recalls were caused by a microbiological contaminant. For cheese (Cheese, Cottage Cheese, and Cheese Snacks), ~86% (12) of recalls were caused by a microbiological contaminant. Over half (7 out of 12) of these microbiological recalls were due to *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Improper Labeling/Undeclared Allergens

For ice cream and gelato, half of the recalls (6) were due to undeclared allergens. Four of these 6 recalls occurred due to issues with the packaging process, specifically, packaging ice cream in the incorrect containers. The other 2 ice cream and gelato recalls were due to not declaring the item on the packaging. ➔



As a Master Cheesemaker, Ryan prides himself on continually improving.

“We’re always making adjustments and small improvements every day,” he said. “It’s really rewarding to look back on how those small improvements add up over time and reflect in the finished product. And then seeing the consumers enjoying your product and coming back for more; it really validates everything.”

He added that completing the Master program is a great opportunity to learn more about the cheesemaking process, “It definitely gets you to think a lot more about why you’re doing things ... It really opens your eyes and

makes you really look at your process and try to make improvements.”

With four Master medals, Ryan sees the Wisconsin Master Cheesemaker® program as an important asset for the state’s cheese industry.

“I’m really honored to be a part of it and to be included with the other Master Cheesemakers,” he said. “It’s a pretty tight knit community; everyone knows everybody. It means a lot to go through the program and be recognized for completing it.”

For more details, www.cdr.wisc.edu/master-cheesemakers 🌟

Continued from page 5

a heart monitor for your plant and tells you how effective the sanitation programs/procedures/Master Sanitation Schedule, foot traffic flow, and sanitary design of your plant is actually working.

In February 2021, El Abuelito had some of their cheese recalled. This recall could have been avoided as well. Besides the major lack of any food safety programs, the FDA issued a warning letter 8 months prior to the recall that found (adjacent to food contact) *Listeria innocua* and *Listeria greyi* on zone 2 surfaces. If there was an environmental monitoring program (with the help of other pre-requisite programs of course) it would have at least identified there was a consistent issue and corrective actions would have occurred. This facility was only swabbed for coliform and ATP. The lack of appropriate corrective action lead to the inevitable post-pasteurization contamination.

Fluid Milk Issues

One outlier of these recalls has been in pasteurized milk. It is being reviewed at the National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS) conference if there needs to be an investigation over controls on sanitation chemicals due to two recalls that occurred because of cleaning chemicals and sanitizer getting into the milk. Typically, recalls on pasteurized milk are few and far between. Incidents like this make us re-evaluate the strength of the sanitation pre-requisite programs. Pasteurized milk did not have any other reported recalls besides these two residual sanitizer incidents.

Raw fluid milk continues to be a high percentage of the total dairy product recalls, even though it occupies a much lower share of the total dairy product volume. There are many discussions in state legislatures to remove the barriers of selling raw milk, but there have been no new well-designed studies to prove this is a safe practice.

Dairy Product Recall Summary

Here is a summary of the dairy industry products that had the most recalls in 2022.

CHEESE - Cheese is dealing with the same old foe: *Listeria monocytogenes* and we have to get back to the basics of following GMP's, separation of raw and ready-to-eat, proper sanitation, and sanitary equipment design.

ICE CREAM - Allergens are the biggest reason for ice cream recalls. Creating accurate labels, and applying proper allergen preventive controls (Label review and changeover procedures) will help reduce recalls in ice cream.

RAW MILK - Pasteurization is an excellent tool that ought to be used. With no competitive cultures and optimal growth conditions, the risks associated with raw milk currently outweigh any potential benefits.

For a **comprehensive list** of the 2022 dairy recalls, visit <https://www.cdr.wisc.edu/assets/caption-images/USA-and-Canada-2022-Dairy-Recall-Summary.pdf>

For more information and resources related to dairy safety and quality, visit <https://www.cdr.wisc.edu/safety-quality>

New CDR Dairy Recall Tracker: This webpage gives links to articles of dairy recalls by month. Visit the Dairy Recall Tracker at <https://www.cdr.wisc.edu/dairy-recall-tracker> 🌟