

Restaurant inspection update: Dead insects, moldy cheese, rotting fruit

By Clark Kauffman
Iowa Capital Dispatch

State, city and county inspectors have cited Iowa restaurants and stores for hundreds of food-safety violations during the past several weeks, including offenses related to moldy and expired food, insects and dirty kitchens.

The findings are reported by the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing, which handles food-establishment inspections at the state level.

Listed below are some of the more serious findings that stem from inspections at Iowa restaurants, stores, care facilities and other businesses between Oct. 10, 2025, and Nov. 13, 2025. (Earlier this year, DIAL began withholding from public disclosure all food-safety inspection reports for eight days past the date of inspection.)

The inspections department reminds the public that its reports are a “snapshot” in time, and violations are often corrected on the spot before the inspector leaves the establishment. For a more complete list of all inspections, along with additional details on each of the inspections listed below, visit the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing’s website.

El Senor Cactus, 1534 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City – During a Nov. 13 visit, a Johnson County inspec-

tor observed that the internal temperature of the restaurant’s grilled chicken reached only 152 degrees. The chicken was immediately removed from service and recooked to the required internal temperature of 165 before being served. In addition, house-made “Cancun sauce” had been held beyond the seven-day limit and had to be discarded.

The inspector also noted that several containers of prepared foods and sauces stored in a kitchen cooler did not have the required date-markings to ensure freshness and safety, and the vacuum-sealed frozen fish was being thawed while still sealed, creating a risk that any spoilage would go undetected.

Also, two containers of raw chicken were left out to thaw at room temperature on a food-prep table, a container of cooked beans was stored on the kitchen floor, and the inspector noted “excessive debris” that had built up in the microwave ovens and the interior of the kitchen’s two-door cooler.

La Mich Grocery, 1215-1221 Franklin St., Waterloo — During a Nov. 13 visit, a Black Hawk County inspector cited this establishment for 12 risk-factor violations, an unusually high number, and noted that the three-bay sink used to sanitize dishes did not have the required amount of

sanitizing solution. Also, the establishment’s “food safety certification” had expired, and food items prepared several days earlier were holding at 45 to 48 degrees — too warm to ensure safety — and had to be discarded.

In addition, the salsa in the retail cooler was not date-marked to ensure freshness and safety, and a designated handwashing sink in the meat-deli area had meat debris in it, indicating it was being used for purposes other than handwashing. The inspector also noted, without elaborating, that the business “was not date-marking items correctly,” and that enchilada sauce and maize de pozole were being held past their maximum seven-day shelf life. Also, cooked food items were being cooled in large, sealed containers, a process that slowed the cooling process.

St. Ambrose University Cafeteria, 518 W. Locust St., Davenport — During a Nov. 12 visit, a Scott County inspector noted that access to handwashing sinks was blocked by a garbage can and a pail of detergent, and that food items — including homemade raspberry filling, fruit dip and lemon cream — were dated Oct. 24, a full 19 days prior to the inspection, indicating they had been held beyond the maximum of seven days.

Also, an open bag of let-

tuce was not date-marked to ensure freshness and safety; raw chicken was stored over ready-to-eat food items, risking cross-contamination; the food-prep coolers in the main kitchen and a cooler at the pizza station were marred by excess food debris, as were the pop dispensers and the salad station’s prep cooler.

The inspector also noted that there were no date-markings on food items inside the walk-in cooler or on opened bags of spinach in the “allergy food station,” or on the homemade salad dressing. In addition, the large stainless-steel mixer in the salad-prep area was marred by rust and peeling paint, and the floor underneath the kitchen equipment in the main kitchen was peeling and coming apart.

Jersey Grille, 5255 Jersey Ridge Road, Davenport — During a Nov. 10 visit, a Scott County inspector noted that kitchen employees were not following accepted handwashing practices, and that multiple unspecified food items were being held past their discard dates.

Also, the ice machine and fountain-drink machine each contained “debris and gunk,” there were no paper towels at four of the handwashing sinks in the kitchen and restrooms, the walk-in freezer’s compressor was leaking fluid

onto “food and packaging” inside the cooler, food was being stored on the floor, and several food items were missing labels bearing the date of their opening or preparation.

In addition, soy sauce was being stored at room temperature rather than being refrigerated, apples were “discolored and rotting,” and heavy whipping cream that was dated Aug. 26, 2025 – 10 weeks prior to the inspection – was still being served. Also, vacuum-sealed frozen fish was being thawed while still inside its packaging, creating a risk that any spoilage would go undetected, and the floor below the fryers, the surface under the grills, the oven trays, the kitchen ceiling and the vent hoods were all marred by “debris, dust and gunk.”

La Leona, 2075 John F. Kennedy Road, Dubuque — On Nov. 7, a City of Dubuque inspector visited the establishment for a preopening inspection and cited the establishment for nine risk-factor violations. The inspector denied the business a license until a reinspection could take place at a later date.

Among the violations: The ice machine was marred by a layer of dust and debris and needed “a thorough cleaning before it is used,” there were no handwashing sinks in the ware-washing area or the women’s restroom, all of

the handwashing sinks lacked soap, and all of the food-contact surfaces needed a more thorough cleaning, with all of the equipment noted as having a layer of dust. “Entire restaurant needs a more thorough cleaning,” the inspector observed.

Gordie’s Bar & Grill, 108 13th St., Centerville — During a Nov. 6 visit, an inspector for Appanoose, Davis, Lucas and Monroe counties found lettuce dated Oct. 17, 2025, and a can of Raid Ant & Roach Killer, unapproved for use in a commercial food establishment, in the kitchen. The inspector also reported finding sliced cheese and diced tomatoes that were not dated to ensure freshness and safety. “No thermometer to check food temperatures,” the inspector reported.

Izumi Sushi & Hibachi, 941 E. San Marnan Drive, Waterloo — During a Nov. 4 visit, a Black Hawk County inspector cited this establishment for 14 risk-factor violations, an exceptionally high number. Among the issues: sushi rice that was being prepared and then held was not marked with the time it was to be discarded; there was an unspecified “build-up” of some kind in the ice machine; raw meat was stored above ready-to-eat

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In the sky during December*

By David Voigts



December will be an interesting month in the sky. Saturn will start the month almost straight south during the early evening in a dim part of the sky. The only reasonable bright stars nearby are the Great Square of Pegasus (the Winged Horse) about two fist-widths above Saturn. During the month, Saturn will start to drift into the southwestern sky as Earth in its faster orbit starts to leave it behind. Very bright Jupiter will join Saturn after it rises at about 8:00 as December begins and at about 6:00 by the end of the month. It will be to the lower right of Pollux and Castor, above Pollux, the bright twin stars of Gemini (the Twins).

The other planets will be more of a challenge to see. Mars technically will be in the southwestern evening sky during early December, but it will set within a half hour after the Sun. It will probably not be visible without binoculars and a very clear western horizon. Venus also may be difficult to spot. It will shine very low in the southeast just before sunrise. Mercury will rise before Venus and should be easier to see. Although this is Mercury’s best morning appearance for the year, it will still be low in the southeastern sky.

This is also the time of the year when Cassiopeia (the Queen) is at her highest in the northern sky. Look almost overhead for the unmistakable “E” or “M” formed by Cassiopeia’s five moderately bright stars. The bottom or open part of the grouping points toward Polaris, the North Star, the only moderately bright star in that part of the sky. This is useful in finding north at this time of the year when the Big Dipper, which is usually used to find north, is very low in the sky and is often obscured.

If the stars of Cassiopeia are numbered with the western-most star being 1, they can be used to find other constellations. A line from star 2 through star 1 points a short distance to Cepheus (the King). His five brightest, but dim, stars form the shape of a stick horse with its pointed roof near Polaris. A line from star 3 through star 4 points to Perseus (the Hero) and midway the dim Double Cluster. A line from star 3 through star 2 points farther to the Great Square of Pegasus (the Winged Horse). The northeastern star of the Great Square is also a part of Andromeda (the Princess). Her brightest stars extend eastward as a line of two more stars. Finally, stars 1, 2, and 3 form an arrow that points to the Andromeda galaxy that is visible with binoculars.

These constellations are the main characters in a sto-

ry from Greek mythology. Cassiopeia was beautiful, but when she boasted that she was more beautiful than the sea nymphs (minor goddesses), Poseidon (Roman, Neptune) did not like it. To punish her, he sent Cetus (the Sea Monster) to ravage the coast. In order to find a way to stop this, Cassiopeia and her husband Cepheus consulted an oracle who gave them the distressing news that the only way to stop the sea monster was to sacrifice their daughter Andromeda to it. They reluctantly did this by chaining Andromeda to a rock along the coast. At the last minute, Perseus came flying by on the winged sandals that he had been given by Mercury and accompanied by Pegasus. Perseus was returning from killing the Gorgon Medusa, who would turn anyone to stone that looked at her. Perseus carried her head in a bag, but he exposed the head and turned the sea monster to stone, saving Andromeda. They later few off together on Pegasus.

Observing Highlights

Dec. 4 The Moon will be to the upper left of Aldebaran, the brightest star in Taurus (the Bull).

Dec. 6 After they rise at about 8:00, the Moon will be above very bright Jupiter and to the right of Castor and upper right of Pollux, the bright twin stars of Gemini (the Twins).

Dec. 7 Mercury will be at its highest point above the eastern horizon. Look about 45 minutes before sunrise. Mercury will be about as high for a few mornings before and after this date.

Dec. 13 The Geminid meteor shower will peak tonight with meteors seeming to have come from near the bright star Castor in Gemini (the Twins). This shower has the advantage that the peak comes early, so many meteors can be seen before midnight. Up to 100 meteors an hour may be seen under optimal conditions.

Dec. 17 The crescent Moon will be to upper right of Mercury, quite low in the sky during morning twilight.

Dec. 21 The day of the winter solstice, which marks the longest night of star gazing for the year.

Moon Phase	Date	Rises	Highest Point	Sets	When Visible
Full moon	Dec. 4	Sunset	Midnight	Sunrise	All night
Last quarter	Dec. 11	Midnight	Sunrise	Noon	A.M.
New Moon	Dec. 19	Sunrise	Noon	Sunset	Not visible
First quarter	Dec. 28	Noon	Sunset	Midnight	P.M.

*Dates and times are approximate.

Sources: *StarDate*, Jan-Feb and Nov-Dec 2025. Vol. 53, Nos. 1 and 6.

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SkyandTelescope.org

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and a general unease about the farm economy.

He said on the other hand, he has been encouraged by conversations and legislative efforts to address some of the “fundamental issues in farming” like consolidation and high input costs.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley and U.S. Rep. Ashley Hinson, both Republicans from Iowa, have introduced legislation known as the Fertilizer Research Act that would require a government study on consolidation and pricing in the fertilizer industry.

Grassley additionally led a hearing in the Senate in late October about consolidation in the fertilizer and seed industries that he alleged are causing elevated input costs.

“Whatever you want to call it right now, farmers are still incredibly concerned about what it’s costing to produce the crop, and what the price is right now,” Cannon said. “There’s still a tremendous amount of concern about what it’s going to cost for next year’s crop to produce it.”

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