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98% of Moscow's Shawarma Joints Are Unsanitary, Consumer Watchdog Says

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Igor Ivanko / Moskva News Agency

Ninety-eight percent of Moscow's popular shawarma restaurants do not comply with Russian food hygiene standards, according to the city consumer protection watchdog.

Last year, a Federal Consumer Protection Service (Rospotrebnadzor) inspection uncovered foodborne bacterial pathogens in a majority of the 252 shawarma spots in Moscow.

Related article: All Moscow Shawarma Joints Violate Food Safety Regulations, Consumer Watchdog Says

This year, health violations were uncovered in 65 of 66 inspected shawarma shops, Rospotrebnadzor's Moscow branch said in a statement Thursday.

Bacteria were found on vendors' hands in half of the shops and some vendors lacked the required paperwork or knowledge to handle food safely. Rospotrebnadzor uncovered

violations of food storage and safety standards, as well as no water to wash hands or disinfect equipment.

Rospotrebnadzor said it shut down 34 shawarma joints, filed 53 administrative cases and destroyed more than 600 kilograms of unmarked meat and other products.

Shawarma, a meat dish with origins in the Middle East, has become a popular street food in Russia over the past decade.

In 2016, Moscow residents launched an internet campaign in support of shawarma after rumors that city authorities were planning to ban its sale over safety concerns.

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