
FOOD SAFETY

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Amen to Food Safety

Spring is in the air and seasonal foods are on the tips of our taste buds. Whether you celebrate Easter, Passover or merely the arrival of spring, the festivities will include a feast of familiar foods. In honor of the season, this issue of *Food Safety* looks at food safety for some popular spring meats and eats, and also at Jewish and Muslim dietary laws.

The issue also includes safety tips for one food that's popular fare for both Passover and Easter. Eggs often cause foodborne illness when not properly handled, cooked or stored. Read on to learn from egg safety mistakes made by one food-service kitchen.

Food safety *faux pas* leaves egg on faces

The kitchen staff of the Minneapolis Hyatt Regency learned a lesson after 17 employees, including the executive chef, and 46 guests contracted *Salmonella enteritidis* after eating eggs Benedict.

Ironically, the breakfast buffet was served to a group of 280 people who attended a Food on Film Conference. These food stylists arrange dishes for magazines, cookbooks, television and movies. But, when the Hyatt's kitchen staff attempted to make picture-perfect eggs, they perfected Salmonella instead.

Their first mistake was using unpasteurized eggs. The next mistake was cracking 140 eggs into a stone crock the afternoon before the breakfast. "By putting the eggs in a stone crock, they had an insulation factor working on them," says Betty Packer with the city's Department of Environment.

The next morning the staff made the eggs Benedict sauce. Once mixed, the sauce sat 30 additional minutes before being cooked. The last food safety error was cooking the eggs to 43°C (110°F), instead of at least 71°C (160°F). Voilà! It's the perfect recipe for Salmonella.

Egg safety lessons:

? Do not "pool eggs." When the kitchen staff cracked 140 eggs together in one big bowl, they asked for trouble. Bacteria are easier to control in small quantities. Also, small batches have less time to grow bacteria since they're used more quickly than a big batch.

? Use federally inspected and pasteurized eggs and real egg products (frozen, refrigerated liquid or dried eggs). Not only will this move reduce food safety risks, but also egg products are labor-saving and cost-effective.

? Do not crack eggs a day before they will be cooked. Cracking the eggs only allows time for pathogens to multiple.

Easter and Passover Food Safety Tips

Spring lamb, as well as beef, is often served this time of year. But, without proper handling, foodborne illness could spoil the occasion. Follow these safety guidelines and use a thermometer.

Beef and Lamb

? Cook roasts, steaks and chops until they reach at least 63°C (145°F) in an oven that is set at a temperature no lower than 163°C (325°F).

? Cook ground meats until they reach at least 71°C (160°F).

? Keep refrigerated, marinated meat no longer than five days before cooking.

Poultry

? Defrost turkey or chicken in the refrigerator, allowing one day for every five pounds.

? Roast a whole bird on at least 163°C (325°F) until it reaches the internal temperature of 82°C (180°F) when tested in thigh with a thermometer.

Jewish and Islamic Dietary Laws

Religious dietary laws are sacred and spiritual to many faiths. But now, non-religious people are buying Kosher and Halal foods. Rightly or wrongly, many people perceive them as being safer and more wholesome than other manufactured foods.

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions about dietary laws:

Jewish Dietary Laws

Q: What is Kosher?

A: Kosher is the Hebrew word that means proper or acceptable according to Jewish dietary laws. A kosher food is acceptable to eat under Judaism. For a manufactured food to be considered kosher, a non-company representative, such as a rabbi, must directly supervise the process.

Q: What do OU, chof K and star K mean on a package?

A: OU, chof K and star K mean the product is kosher and has been certified by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregation of America or Orthodox Union Organized Kashrut Laboratories.

Q: What does the symbol P mean next to the OU, chof K and star K?

A: This means the product is kosher for Passover.

Q: How are kosher foods categorized?

A: Kosher foods are divided into three categories – dairy, meat and pareve. Pareve is a food that is neither dairy nor meat, such as fish, grains, fruits, eggs, artificial sweeteners and other non-animal manufactured food products. Pareve foods may be eaten or cooked

with either meat or dairy. Though fish is pareve, it may not be eaten or cooked with poultry.

Q: Are there animals that are considered kosher?

A: An animal is kosher if it has split hooves and chews cud, such as a cow, sheep or goat. Chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese are kosher. But birds of prey are not kosher.

Muslim Dietary Laws

Q: What does Halal mean?

A: The word Halal is used for foods that are permitted under Islamic dietary laws. To be Halal food must be free of, and not contain any ingredient from, a pig, dog, donkey or carnivore. Also, the food must be prepared with utensils and equipment that has been cleansed according to Islamic law.

Q: What is Haraam?

A: Haraam is the term used for foods that are not permitted under Islam. Also, if a trained Muslim does not slaughter an animal according to Islamic law, the animal is considered Haraam. Islamic law forbids eating animals with protruding canine teeth, amphibious animals, insects and birds of prey. The consumption of alcohol and other intoxicating drinks is also forbidden.

Ham is often served at Easter. Prepare and serve it so you won't spoil the celebration.

Canned hams, as well as vacuum-packed fully cooked hams, can be eaten straight from the container.


If you choose to heat a ham, cook it on at least 163°C (325°F) until the ham reaches an internal temperature of 60°C (140°F).

Uncooked ham must be cooked at 163°C (325°F) or higher until its internal temperature reaches 71°C (160°F).


The Hard-Boiled Truth


Eggs have played a big part of welcoming spring since pagan times. Today, the egg still takes center stage as a symbol of rebirth. But whether eaten plain or after being dyed and used for an egg hunt, proper handling and storing eggs will prevent foodborne illness.

Cooking

 Gently place eggs in a pan of room temperature water. Bring to a boil. Then remove pan from heat and simmer 15 minutes.


Cooling


 Immediately immerse in cool water to prevent overcooking.

 Refrigerate the eggs if they will be served later.


Dyeing

 Do not dye cracked eggs.


 Use only food coloring or food grade egg dyes.


 Refrigerate after dyeing and displaying.

Hiding

 Make sure to hide eggs where they won't come in contact with contaminants such as dirt, pets, wild animals, birds, reptiles, insects or lawn chemicals. Wash the eggs and your hands before eating. Don't eat eggs that have been hidden for two hours or longer.

Eating

 Throw out eggs that have cracked after being dyed, hidden or displayed. Bacteria can easily enter through the cracked egg.

 Refrigerate hard-boiled eggs if you do not plan to serve them right after they have cooked and cooled.

 Discard eggs that have not been refrigerated for two hours or more.

 Eat or toss cooked eggs within one week.

REMEMBER: Wash your hands when cooking, cooling and dyeing your eggs to avoid bacterial contamination.

Egg-cellent Safety Tips

An eggshell protects the inside of the egg from exterior pathogens. But Salmonella can contaminate the inside of the egg before the shell developed. Once the egg is cracked, bacteria can quickly grow. Here is a list of important safety tips:

Receiving and Storage

- Accept only refrigerated, clean and odor-free eggs.
- Keep refrigerated at 4°C (40°F) or below.
- Purchase eggs in quantities that will be used within two weeks.
- Discard cracked or leaking eggs.
- Use eggs in the order they were received – first ones in, first ones used. This ensures proper turnover and freshness.

Preparing and Cooking

- Wash your hands before and after handling eggs.
- Clean and sanitize pots, pans, mixing bowls and cooking utensils before and after they've been used to mix or cook raw eggs.
- Cook eggs to at least 63°C (145°F).
- Make sure egg dishes, such as casseroles or quiche, reach 71°C (160°F). Test with a thermometer.



