



Food Safety Monthly Update

Information from the desk of State Extension Consumer Food Safety Specialist

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Welcome to the fourth edition of the Kansas State University/University of Missouri Extension Food Safety update. This update is intended to provide timely, credible food safety information to county/district FCS agents, regional Food and Nutrition Specialists, as well as anyone else interested in such information. I hope this is helpful to you- please let me know any comments or questions you may have on this newsletter or any other food safety matters.

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Holiday food safety press release

I know that Christmas is only a few days away, but hopefully this information on holiday food safety will still be of use to some of you. This press release includes information on ham and egg products, as well as general food safety information, so it is of course applicable year round:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/news/DisplayStory.aspx?N=2060>

Cookie dough blog- is it only the eggs?

This blog post was very difficult for me to write as I LOVE cookie dough, but it is also important to know the risks of consuming foods raw that are intended to be

cooked. The blog details how it is not only the eggs in the raw cookie dough that could cause foodborne illness, but also other ingredients:

<http://nutritionmythbusters.blogspot.com/>

Public Radio story on FDA inspection of imported food

The Mid-Missouri Public Radio station recently prepared a story discussing that the FDA only inspects 2% of food imported into the US and what that means from a consumer food safety perspective:

<http://kbia.org/post/fda-inspects-just-2-percent-imported-food-shipments>

Food Safety Q&A

I was asked the following questions in a presentation I gave recently at a Missouri Nutrition Educator’s conference. I wanted to provide a little more information for any of the people that watched that presentation and thought these questions may be of interest to a broader audience as well.

Q. Is it safe to re-freeze thawed meat?

If meat or any other food is thawed in the refrigerator, it is safe to refreeze it without cooking (although there may be some loss in product quality). However, if foods

were thawed using the cold water method or in the microwave, those foods should be cooked before re-freezing as parts of the product may have been over 40F in the thawing process, which would allow pathogen growth.

If you want to give one uniform message to consumers on what to do with thawed meat that they are no longer planning to use right away, it may be safer to tell them to cook and then freeze meat that has been thawed. USDA has more information available on this [topic](#), as well as on [general defrosting safety](#).

Q. What does the USDA recommendation to have a “rest time” after cooking mean?

On May 24, 2011, the USDA changed their recommended cooking temperatures for meats. As you likely know, the cooking recommendations are as follows:

*Pork, beef, veal, and lamb roasts and steaks: 145F with a 3 minute rest time

*Ground beef, veal, lamb, pork: 160F

*Poultry (ground and whole muscle): 165F

Cooks should start counting the 3 minute rest time AFTER the product has reached 145F and the product has been removed from a grill, oven, or other heat source. This holding time is important as the product temperature will remain constant or continue to rise, thus destroying more harmful pathogens. This rest time also helps the product to maintain its juiciness and flavor, so it is a win-win! More information is available from [USDA](#).

Q. Why do we refrigerate eggs in the US when Europe and many other countries do not?

Changes in egg temperature are a large factor in its safety (as well as quality). If a cold egg is left at room temperature, it can sweat on its outer surface. The moisture from this condensation provides a good growing environment for bacteria on the outside of the shell. This bacteria could then get onto your hands when later handling the eggs and onto any surface that the eggs touch.

Therefore, it is very important for eggs to remain at the same temperature throughout the entire chain from the farm to the time that it is ready to be used. In the US, the FDA requires that eggs are refrigerated as soon as possible after laying and that the cold temperature is maintained all the way to the consumer, which helps to control the growth of pathogens such as Salmonella.

Food safety officials in [Europe](#) and in some other countries in the world have decided that it is safer to leave the eggs at room temperature throughout the chain, rather than risking having the temperature of the eggs change if eggs are not refrigerated at various times in the chain.

The important message for consumers is that it is safest to keep eggs refrigerated throughout the entire chain from farm to consumption. In particular, once an egg is refrigerated, it is important to keep it that way. As with other foods that require temperature control for safety, refrigerated eggs should not be left at room temperature more than two hours.

In addition to safety, egg quality is also improved by keeping the eggs refrigerated. In fact, egg quality can decline more during one day at room temperature than during one week in the refrigerator.

References: [University of Maine](#), [United Egg Producers](#)

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