



Loss Control Insight

Myths About Food Safety

Myth No. 1: Mayonnaise causes food poisoning.

Fact: This might have had some validity in your great-great-grandmother's era, when the emulsion of raw eggs and oil was made at home, commercial mayonnaise helps prevent food from spoiling. It is made with pasteurized eggs and also contains vinegar, or other acidic ingredients, and this acidity helps prevent spoilage.

Myth No. 2: Eggs don't need refrigeration. They're stacked on shelves all over the world.

Fact: American eggs are processed differently from European eggs and must be refrigerated. The reason why we refrigerate eggs is because our method of egg production removes their natural protection. While Europeans don't have to refrigerate eggs, Americans absolutely should. There is a special egg washing machine that shampoos them to pristine beauty but also removes the eggs' natural protective coating that keeps moisture in and bacteria out.

Myth No. 3: All meats and poultry should be rinsed before cooking.

Fact: On the contrary, no type of meat or poultry should be rinsed. In the last few years, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture involved with these problems, decided that rather than increase the risk of salmonella, rinsing might be in fact increase it because the salmonella bacteria can hitch a ride on those water droplets and travel around the kitchen.

Myth No. 4: Fish and seafood should be rinsed to get rid of the "fishy smell."

Fact: If fish feels slimy and has a bad smell, it should go back to the store or be pitched out. Fresh fish should have no aroma other than a mild, clean scent of the sea. If it smells like old fish, it is.



Myth No. 5: You should rinse fresh fruits and vegetables but never use soap on them, and you don't have to rinse items that you're going to peel.

Fact: First of all, produce should not be rinsed until you plan to use it. The exception to the soap rule is melons, especially cantaloupe. These field-grown melons can harbor salmonella and when you cut them open the bacteria on the inedible skin can be transferred to the flesh of the melon.

Myth No. 6: It can't hurt to give bagged salad greens that say "ready-to-eat" or "washed" another rinsing.

Fact: In fact, it can be dangerous. All of the pre-washed greens have been through an elaborate and thorough cleaning process just prior to going into the bag. That's why you pay a premium price for them. Rewashing and handling the greens opens up an opportunity for bacterial contamination from your hands or surfaces in the kitchen. Pour the greens into your salad bowl.

Myth No. 7: Food should cool to room temperature on the counter before it goes in the refrigerator.

Fact: Both the cooking and chilling aspects of food safety revolve around the "danger zone" of bacterial growth, which is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as 40 degrees to 140 degrees; food should never be in this temperature range for more than two hours. Food should be refrigerated as soon as possible.

Myth No. 8: Leftovers are safe to eat as long as they still smell and look good.

Fact: Here's where the old adage "when in doubt, throw it out" comes into play, and that's hardly a wives' tale! It would really make life easier if each and every bacterium that potentially caused foodborne illness turned food green and smelly. But most don't. The longest a leftover should be considered safe is three to four days, and that's assuming that it was cooked to the correct temperature and refrigerated quickly. If you can't vividly recall when the food was cooked, ditch it.