



# SERVING UP FOOD SAFETY

From The Food Protection  
Management Office  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension  
Service

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## Sprouts: Why are they so dangerous?

“Like any fresh produce that is consumed raw or lightly cooked, sprouts that are served on salads, wraps, sandwiches, and in some Asian food may contain bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. But unlike other fresh produce, sprouts are grown from seeds and beans under warm and humid conditions. These conditions are also ideal for the growth of bacteria, including Salmonella, Listeria, and E. coli. If just a few harmful bacteria are present in or on the seed, the bacteria can grow to high levels during sprouting, even if you are growing your own sprouts under sanitary conditions at home.

Children, older adults, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems (such as transplant patients and individuals with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and diabetes) should avoid eating raw or lightly cooked sprouts of any kind (including onion, alfalfa, clover, radish, and mung bean sprouts). When eating out, you can ask that raw sprouts not be added to your food. If you purchase a sandwich or salad at a restaurant or delicatessen, check to make sure that raw sprouts have not been added.” (*USDA—Buy, Store, & Serve Safe Food—Sprouts: What You Should Know, 2017*)

### What can you do to help reduce the risk of illness when serving sprouts?

- Purchase from approved suppliers.
- Wash sprouts thoroughly under cool running water before eating or cooking. Washing may reduce bacteria that may be present, but it will not eliminate it.

Cited: <https://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodborneIllnessContaminants/BuyStoreServeSafeFood/ucm114299.htm#prep>

Article by: Rebecca Dittmar

## Summer Catering Tips

According to CDC statistics, illnesses from reported outbreaks of foodborne illness linked to catering exceed those from restaurants or home cooking. **How can your food establishment protect customers from illness?**

- Remember - keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot during transport and at the event
  - Keep food out of the temperature danger zone (41°F-135°F) - regularly check the temperatures of hot and cold foods
  - Use ice baths for cold food and chafing dishes with sternos for hot foods
  - Keep food out of direct sunlight if possible
  - Keep bugs away
  - If food drops below 135°F or goes above 41°F for more than 4 hours—throw it out!
- If dropping off food for an event - leave clear instructions on keeping food hot (135°F or above) or cold (41°F or below) - if not consumed immediately, label with use by dates and proper reheating instructions, and remind customers to not leave food out for longer than 2 hours.
- If preparing the food at the event - follow the same guidelines you would at your food establishment.
  - Keep foods at proper temperatures and cook foods to proper temperatures
  - Do not cross-contaminate
  - Follow proper cleaning and sanitizing of all food contact surfaces
  - Wash hands



Source: CDC Morbidity and Mortality Report “Surveillance for Foodborne Disease Outbreaks 1998-2008” and <https://foodsafety.ecolab.com/us/food-safety/Generic2?storeId=10154&catalogId=3074457345616698718&contentName=caterers>

Article by: Julie Prouse

# Consuming Raw Oysters

Raw oysters are a popular dish among many Americans. There are some populations that are at a higher risk for becoming very sick and/or dying from the consumption of raw oysters. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises high risk populations to not eat raw oysters and only eat oysters that have been cooked.



*Vibrio vulnificus* (*V. vulnificus*) is a bacterium that occurs naturally in warm coastal areas, such as the Gulf of Mexico. *Vibrio vulnificus* is found in higher concentrations in the summer months as water becomes warmer. Oysters feed by filtering water in surrounding areas where vibrios may thrive and as a result concentrate *V. vulnificus* in their tissues. When a person eats these shellfish raw or undercooked, the bacteria enter the digestive tract and multiply rapidly. While not potentially life-threatening to most healthy people, symptoms of *V. vulnificus* infection may occur within 24 to 48 hours of ingestion and may include sudden chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, shock and skin lesions. In people with certain medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes or liver disease death can occur within two days.

Since thoroughly cooking oysters will destroy the bacteria, oysters can continue to be enjoyed by only serving fully cooked oysters (reach minimum internal temperature of 145°F) or have a warning label/disclosure statement about the consumption of raw and undercooked foods being potentially harmful in a conspicuous location such as a menu or table tent.

Source: <https://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/HealthEducators/ucm085365.htm>

Article by: Rebecca Dittmar

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## TFER FAQ (Technical Questions)

### Can a cedar wood plank be used as a cooking surface?

Yes, if the following criteria are met:

- 1) The plank must be a single-use item and be discarded after use.
- 2) The plank must be clean, smooth, and free of any splinters or loose debris.
- 3) Documentation must be available to show that the wood was not treated with any type of chemical substance.



### Are raw fruits and vegetables considered time/temperature control for safety foods (TCS)?

No except for cut tomatoes, cut leafy greens, cut melons, and raw seed sprouts.

Using Table B in §228.2 (144) of the TFER, cut fresh tomatoes, cut leafy greens, cut melons, and raw seed sprouts are considered a TCS food because they will support the growth of foodborne pathogens. Whole intact tomatoes and melons with their protective waxy cuticle/rinds and lower water activity on the vegetable/fruit surface do not support the growth of foodborne pathogens on the surface and would not be considered a TCS food.

### Can a food employee wear a medical identification bracelet?

A food employee, while preparing food, is not allowed to wear jewelry on their arms or hands, with the exception of a smooth, plain ring. Necklaces with medical information or identification tags are acceptable.

### Does a triggered sprayer on the end of a hose serve as adequate backflow prevention?

A triggered sprayer on the end of a hose is not an adequate backflow prevention device.

Cited: Texas DSHS -TFER FAQ (Technical Questions)

By: Julie Prouse



## Upcoming Food Protection Management Course

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<http://foodsafety.tamu.edu> or visit us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/foodprotectionmanagement](http://www.facebook.com/foodprotectionmanagement)