



SERVING UP FOOD SAFETY

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SPRING 2008

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Cantaloupes Linked to Salmonella Outbreak!

Salmonella continues to be a problem for the food service industry as you hear it in the news media and hear about warnings and recalls.

This time it was on March 22, 2008, when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration advised consumers not to eat cantaloupes from a Honduran grower because they were contaminated with *Salmonella* Litchfield. The outbreak has so far caused over 50 illnesses in 16 states (Texas was not on the list), and at least nine in Canada.

Cantaloupes are on the list of the top 5 fruits and vegetables to receive warnings and recalls for outbreaks like this one. Growing conditions and the ability to support bacterial growth are the main reasons for being on the list.

Research has shown there is a potential for bacteria to be pushed into the meat of the cantaloupe during slicing. Many authorities recommend washing the cantaloupe before cutting. However, due to the roughness of the rind, it is very difficult to wash away many of the bacteria.

Source: International Food Safety Infosheet, March 27, 2008

What Can You Do in Your Establishment?

- Purchase melons that are not bruised or damaged. If buying fresh-cut melons, be sure it is refrigerated or surrounded by ice, then refrigerate promptly.
- Make sure food handlers are washing hands properly with hot water and soap before and **after** handling the melons.
- Use a clean scrub brush with cool tap water and scrub the whole melon, especially cantaloupes immediately before serving. Don't use any soap or detergents.
- Remember to throw away any leftover cut melons if left in the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours
- Use proper equipment when transporting or storing melons, especially cantaloupes



Source: FDA Warne of Salmonella Risk with Cantaloupes from *Agropecuria Montelibano*

Avoiding Foodborne Risk is Easy

Harmful bacteria that may be in the soil or water (where produce is grown) may come in contact with fruits and vegetables and contaminate them. Fresh produce can also become contaminated after it is harvested, such as during preparation or storage.

Eating contaminated fruit and or drinking juices made from contaminated produce can lead to foodborne illness, which can cause serious - and sometimes fatal - infections. Protect your customers from illness by handling your fresh produce safely:

Receiving: Accept only quality produce that is not bruised or damaged.

Storage: Perishable fresh produce should be kept at 41° F or below, including pre-cut or peeled produce, to maintain quality and safety.

Preparation: Thoroughly wash produce **before** peeling or preparing; scrub firm produce like melons and cucumbers and apples with a clean brush, dry the produce with a clean paper towel.

Separate: Keep raw produce that will be eaten raw separate from other foods, especially raw meats, fish, and poultry. Also, keep them separated from the equipment used to handle these foods. Be sure to wash non-porous (plastic) cutting boards, dishes, utensils and preparation counter areas with hot soapy water, then sanitize and air dry between all uses. Remember to wash any equipment used to prepare potentially hazardous foods every 4 hours.



Source: Safe Handling of Raw Produce and Fresh Squeezed Fruit & Vegetable Juices, US FDA



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