

Environmental Services Department

Food Safety Guidance for Businesses



The safe use of shell eggs

Raw eggs are a common source of Salmonella which can cause severe food poisoning and occasionally can even cause death.

The Department of Health's advice is that vulnerable people should:

"avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked food made from them such as mayonnaise, mousses or ice cream as well as raw eggs mixed into drinks".

This is particularly important for children, the elderly and people who are already ill, who are much more vulnerable to infection.

What are the risks involved in using shell eggs?

- Shell eggs are often contaminated with Salmonella. There is a much greater risk of cracked or broken eggs being contaminated.
- The shells and packaging may be contaminated as well as the contents. Dirty eggs are particularly likely to carry Salmonella.
- If eggs are not stored properly Salmonella can multiply increasing the risk of contamination.
- Salmonella on the surface of eggs and on packaging can contaminate hands and protective clothing and be spread to other foods.
- Be careful when cracking or whisking eggs as you may spread contamination to other foods or equipment by droplets of raw egg or pieces of broken shell.

When should raw eggs not be used?

Raw eggs should not be used for any of the following:

- making mayonnaise or ice cream;
- as a binding for sandwich fillings;
- desserts such as tiramisu, zabaglione, mousses;
- baked alaska, hollandaise sauce or other dishes where the egg is only lightly cooked;
- icing on cakes;
- drinks such as "egg nogg"

What are the alternatives to shell egg?

Many dishes such as mayonnaise, tiramisu and mousses have traditionally been made with shell eggs. Recent food poisoning outbreaks have shown that this is not safe. A suitable alternative is pasteurised liquid egg. This is widely available as whole egg, egg yolk and egg white in various sizes of container including 1 litre packs. A number of companies also supply frozen scrambled egg which simply needs to be microwaved before serving. Details of suppliers are available from the address below. Alternatively, good quality ready made products such as mayonnaise are widely available. Recipes for dishes such as those listed above, which use raw egg should be amended to specify the use of pasteurised liquid egg.

Delivery and storage

- Eggs should be purchased from a reputable supplier and checked when they are delivered. Broken or cracked eggs or dirty packaging should be returned to your supplier or disposed of.
- Eggs should be stored in a refrigerator or cool store room. They should be kept in their date labelled packs if they are not date marked on the shell. Set up a stock rotation system to make sure that all eggs are used before their date code expires.
- Do not wash or wipe eggs as this makes them more susceptible to contamination.
- Eggs should be used within half an hour after they have been removed from the refrigerator.

Preparation

- Shell eggs should be cracked or whisked in an area away from other food or clean equipment which could become contaminated.
- Shells and packaging should be disposed of as soon as possible.
- Equipment and utensils which might have been contaminated should be thoroughly cleaned as soon as possible.
- Dishes containing raw egg should be cooked as soon as possible.
- If glazes or bindings containing raw egg must be prepared in advance, they should be stored in the refrigerator.

Food handlers

- Food safety training should include the safe use of shell eggs.
- Hands should be washed before and after handling shell eggs or their packaging.
- Soiled protective clothing should be changed before preparing ready to eat foods.

Hazard analysis

Hazard analysis systems should include information on the safe use of shell eggs. A separate Information Sheet on Hazard Analysis is available from the address which appears at the foot of this page.

Where can I get more information?

Publications:

"The handling and storage of eggs from farm to retail - A Code of Practice" (PB2818)
MAFF Publications - Tel. 0645 556000

"Eggs and salmonella, the facts".
The British Egg Industry Council - Tel. 020 7370 7411

Food Standards Agency: website www.food.gov.uk

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These notes are only intended as a simplified guide to Food Safety matters and do not cover all aspects in detail. If you require more specific advice on any aspect of food, please contact:



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