

Raw and lightly cooked eggs in food service and manufacturing

Simple tips and special care help to minimise any risk of food poisoning from raw and lightly cooked eggs

Egg-based foods

Restaurants, cafés, bakeries, caterers and manufacturers of condiments and desserts should take extra care with any food containing raw or lightly cooked egg.

Food poisoning outbreaks linked to eggs have been associated with foods that are uncooked or lightly cooked such as:

- sauces and spreads such as mayonnaise, aioli, hollandaise and egg butter
- desserts made without a cooking step such as cheesecake, tiramisu and mousse
- lightly cooked foods such as custard, meringue, cold soufflé, fried ice cream, some ice cream and gelato made on the premises
- savoury dishes such as steak tartare, Japanese sukiyaki and Korean yuk hwe
- soft poached, runny or coddled eggs
- drinks such as eggnog and egg flip

Why be careful

Most shell eggs in Australia are clean and free from bacteria but sometimes harmful bacteria can be found:

- inside the egg, which is more likely if the shell is cracked. Some cracks are obvious but even hairline cracks where the shell membrane looks intact can be a problem, and
- on the egg, which is more likely if the shell is dirty with yolk, albumen, soil, feathers and faecal or other matter stuck to the outside.



Example of hairline crack



Example of dirty eggs

As with any animal-based food, egg and egg products need to be treated with appropriate care to keep them safe to consume.

- All food containing raw or lightly cooked egg and egg product needs to be handled correctly.
- Consider the likely consumers. Anyone can be made ill by problems with egg-based foods but pregnant women, children under 5 years, people over 70 years and anyone with a serious illness can be more severely affected.

Egg safety tips

The Authority strongly recommends businesses:

- offer safer alternatives to higher risk products. Commercially manufactured mayonnaises, for example, are pasteurised and use proven recipes
- use pasteurised egg products for preparation of uncooked and lightly cooked foods

Pasteurised egg ingredients are an excellent, quality replacement for shell eggs in many foods:

- processed eggs are supplied in liquid, frozen or dried forms
- sugared egg pulp is available for cakes and desserts
- salted egg yolk is available for mayonnaise and sauces

If raw and lightly cooked eggs are used, other steps to help maintain safety include:

Accept and use only good quality shell eggs

- supplied in new packaging
- clean on the outside
- free from cracks
- correctly labelled with the supplier's name and date code

Handle eggs correctly

- keep eggs refrigerated
- use finished egg products immediately or keep refrigerated

- wash and dry hands before and after handling eggs
- use a utensil or clean hands to separate egg yolks and whites, not the shell
- keep kitchen surfaces, utensils and bowls clean and dry
- use a clean container for every batch; do not top up sauces, mayonnaise or egg butter
- keep raw egg ingredients away from ready-to-eat food
- understand the safe storage life of products
- have your process and recipe checked by an expert food technologist

Cook food thoroughly

- the centre of thoroughly cooked foods with shell egg ingredients should reach at least 72°C
- cook eggs until the white is firm and yolk begins to thicken

Food law

Food businesses must make sure the food they make and sell is safe to eat. Requirements are set out in:

- *Food Act 2003* (NSW)
- Food Standards Code, and
- food safety programs if applicable.

Eggs and egg products must be properly labelled and safely handled, prepared and stored.

Where a pathogen may be present, food businesses are required to use a process step reasonably known to achieve the microbiological safety of the food. See Standard 3.2.2 cl 7(1)(b)(ii). Help interpreting this requirement can be found in *Safe Food Australia* at www.foodstandards.gov.au/_srcfiles/complete_safefood.pdf

There are serious penalties for selling unsafe food.

Remember the golden rules of food safety

- keep it hot
- keep it clean
- keep it cold, and
- check the label

More information

The Food Standards Code is available at www.foodstandards.gov.au/thecode/

More information on egg food safety is at: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/industry-sector-requirements/eggs/

About the NSW Food Authority

The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure that food sold in NSW is safe and correctly labelled.

It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to limit foodborne illness by regulating the safety of the production, storage, preparation and promotion of food.

For more information visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au, or call 1300 552 406.