



Handling Raw Chicken

The Issue

Some food businesses may not be aware of the risks associated with handling raw chicken.

Background

Over 90% of cases of food borne illness reported to the South Australian Department of Health are due to *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* bacteria. While other meats, and much less commonly other foods, carry these bacteria, raw chicken is the most important source. Most raw chicken will carry one or both of these bacteria and consuming low numbers of them can cause illness. Cooking will kill the bacteria but undercooking and, very importantly, cross-contamination from raw chicken or its drip to ready-to-eat foods can result in illness.

Food Safety Advice

Businesses that handle raw chicken can guard against the risk of food poisoning by following this advice:

1. **Ensure chicken is delivered at 5°C or less. The packaging should be intact, no evidence of drip from the chicken on the outside, to prevent accidental contact with hands or equipment.**
2. **Store chicken at 5°C or less. Store in a manner that eliminates the possibility of other foods contacting the chicken or its drip.**
3. **Best practice is to thaw raw chicken in the fridge. Ensure that the drip is contained and that the centre of the chicken is fully thawed.**
4. **Preferably handle raw poultry within an area dedicated to the handling of raw meats and with dedicated equipment. Colour coding of chopping boards and the use of distinctive knives will assist in separating raw poultry from other foods.**

5. **Equipment that contacts raw chicken must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised after use. A dishwasher will give good results and the Food Branch website (see below) has a Food Industry Bulletin with specific advice for small businesses on sanitising food contact areas.**
6. **Keep chicken that is being marinated in the fridge.**
7. **After handling raw poultry staff must take extreme care not to cross-contaminate other foods, equipment or surfaces by thoroughly washing and drying hands. Consider use of tongs and disposable gloves and aprons. Fridge handles, power switches and door knobs must be sanitised if they have been accidentally touched with a contaminated glove or hand.**
8. **When cooking chicken a thermometer will provide the best assurance that a core temperature, including stuffing, of at least 75°C is obtained. At this temperature the chicken flesh will be white and firm and juices clear.**

Further Information

If you have queries about the safe handling of raw chicken please contact an Environmental Health Officer at your local Council or the Food Branch of the Department of Health.

Telephone: 8226 7100

Email: food@health.sa.gov.au.

The Food Branch of the Department of Health has food safety information at:

www.health.sa.gov/pehs (click on 'Food Safety')

COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION