

Food Safety: Ready-to-Eat Foods¹

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Ready-to-eat fresh foods can help you save time preparing meals. But some of these foods present a high risk for foodborne illness. Here are some tips for keeping ready-to-eat foods safe.



Credits: Hemera

At the grocery store, choose ready-to-eat fresh foods that are:

- Packaged well
- Clean

- Stored at the right temperature—either refrigerated or heated

At home, ready-to-eat fresh food should be:

- Kept at the right temperature – either refrigerated or heated
- Eaten as soon as possible
- Dated when you open it
- Thrown out three days after you open it

High-Risk Foods

These ready-to-eat foods have a high risk of causing foodborne illness:

- Soft cheeses such as brie, feta, ricotta, blue-veined, and Mexican-style soft cheeses such as queso fresco (unless it is made with pasteurized milk)
- Raw, unpasteurized milk

1. This document is FCS8910 (la versión en español de este documento es *Seguridad Alimentaria: Alimentos Listos para Comer* (FCS8910-Span)), one of a series of the Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 2010. Reviewed April 2016. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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- Soft-serve ice cream
- Hot dogs, luncheon meats, cold cuts—unless they have been reheated to steaming temperatures
- Pâtés/meat spreads—unless canned
- Precooked chicken
- Refrigerated smoked seafood products—unless reheated to steaming temperatures
- Deli-type salads (such as coleslaw)
- Pre-packed raw vegetables and mixed raw vegetable salad
- Pre-cut fresh fruits and fruit salads