

NSW Food Authority Update

Changes to Recommendations for Sanitising of Whole Fruit

Sanitising whole fruit served to vulnerable persons

While contamination of fruit can potentially occur at any point from growing, through to harvesting, processing (including washing), distribution and consumption, there has been little evidence in Australia of foodborne illness as the result of consumption of whole fresh fruit.

Most fruit is washed at least once during handling and packing operations to improve storage quality and reduce spoilage. While most fresh fruits are considered low risk, melons and strawberries are notable exceptions, because they grow close to the ground and may become contaminated with soil. Also, their relatively neutral pH increases the risk that any contaminating bacteria may be able to survive and/or grow. Rockmelon skin also tends to be porous, which can allow the penetration of pathogens and agricultural chemicals. Melons are often dipped in a sanitising solution after harvest to minimise the risks.

Recommendation

The Authority recommends that the application of a sanitiser to fresh fruit served whole (such as apples, pears, grapes) is not required. Facilities may choose to use this as an additional safety barrier after washing. All fresh fruit should be inspected, and any dirty, cut, bruised fruit discarded. All fruit must be washed in running potable quality water before serving.

However, for higher risk fruits (eg strawberries and melons) and all fruit that is to be served as fresh cuts, a commercial food grade sanitiser should still be used as a control measure.

Changes to Recommendations for Storage Shelf Life of Cook Chill and Short Shelf Life Foods

Recommendation

The Authority recommends that short shelf life cook chill food be stored for no more than five days, at 5°C or less, provided it has been cooked at a minimum of 70°C for two minutes (or equivalent). Extended shelf life cook chill may be stored longer than five days, but this would need to be validated and done in accordance with manufacturer's specifications.

All other foods and ingredients used to make cook chill foods must be used within their use-by dates, and any instructions included on the label by the manufacturer (eg 'Use within two days of opening') must be followed. Best practice is to store leftover foods at 5°C or below and use within 48 hrs of opening; although preserved foods may have a longer shelf life (eg jams, hard cheeses). If these products are protected from contamination, a shelf life of ten days at 5°C or less can be adopted.

Source: NSW Food Authority, Food Wise Newsletter, Winter 2010

Update on NSW Food Authority Requirements for Sanitising Whole Fruit and Storage Shelf Life 2010 SEPTEMBER prepared by