



Eggs & Food Safety

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Like any fresh foods, safe food handling of eggs is very important, especially when preparing dishes using raw eggs. While the frequency of outbreaks is very low¹, if not handled correctly, foods made with raw or lightly cooked eggs can be a source of microbial contamination.



Follow these simple tips for buying, storing and preparing eggs:

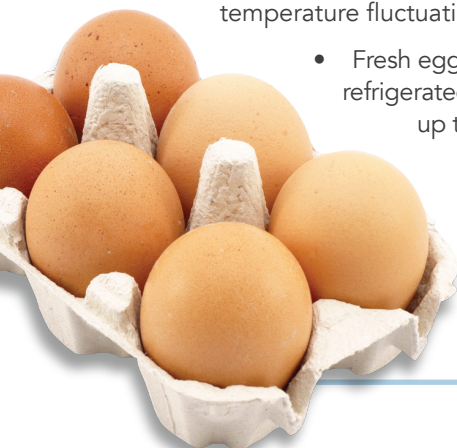
Buying

- Buy eggs from a shop that stores the eggs in a refrigerated cabinet.
- Buy eggs that are clean and not cracked. An egg's shell is its protective barrier from bacteria and food-borne illness.

Storing

- Always keep eggs in their original cardboard carton. Cartons reduce water loss and protect flavours from other foods being absorbed into the egg.
- Put eggs in the refrigerator as soon as possible after purchasing. Place the carton on the shelves of the fridge rather than the door to minimise temperature fluctuations.

- Fresh eggs can be kept refrigerated in their carton for up to six weeks.



Eggs
stored at room temperature age 7 times quicker than eggs stored in the fridge.

- Use eggs before the best before date marked on the carton.

Preparing

- There is no need to rinse whole eggs before using. Washing the egg makes the shell more porous, making it easier for bacteria to get inside. If the surface of an egg is dirty, wipe with a soft cloth or brush lightly using a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- If a recipe calls for eggs to be 'at room temperature', take the eggs out of the refrigerator no more than two hours before you start cooking them. Eggs that are left out of the fridge for too long can start to 'sweat' (from water condensation) and this again makes the shell more porous and provides an environment for bacterial growth.
- Use an egg separator rather than the eggshell to separate the yolks from the whites.
- Keep food surfaces, utensils and hands clean and dry before and after handling eggs.
- Always wash your hands after touching eggshells or raw eggs.

A hard-boiled egg will spin easily on a flat smooth surface, while a raw whole egg will wobble.

Vulnerable Groups

The guidelines for minimising risk are especially important when preparing food for people with a lowered immune system, including people who are ill, those undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy, and those living with HIV/AIDS, pregnant women, children aged under 2 years and people aged over 70 years.



These groups are more vulnerable to food safety issues because their immune systems are weaker, their stomach may have less acid to protect against infection and the impact of the symptoms can be severe and debilitating¹. For these people, the NSW Food Authority recommends that eggs are cooked thoroughly (the yolk and white are firm, and scrambled eggs are not runny) before eating and that care be taken to avoid the following foods that may contain raw eggs:

A raw whole egg will sink to the bottom of a basin of water if it is fresh, but older eggs float because of the large air cell that forms in its base.

FOODS THAT MAY CONTAIN RAW EGGS	
Raw egg mayonnaise or salad dressing (e.g. Caesar dressing)	Korean bibimpap (mixed rice bowl) with a raw egg on top
Aioli (garlic mayonnaise)	Cake or biscuit batter, before cooking
Hollandaise sauce (commonly used on Eggs Benedict)	Fried ice cream with a coating made from raw egg batter
Steak tartare with a raw egg on top	Milkshakes/smoothies with raw egg
Japanese sukiyaki	Dessert mousse
Uncooked cheesecake	Custard
Eggnog	Tiramisu



Eggs are a nutritional powerhouse providing 11 different vitamins and minerals, high quality protein, healthy fats (including omega-3s) and important antioxidants.

For more health and nutrition information and tasty recipe ideas using eggs visit www.eggs.org.au