Safe handling of raw egg products

Restaurants, cafes, bakeries, caterers and manufacturers that manufacture raw egg dressings and sauces need to follow safe handling practices.

The NSW Food Regulation 2010 does not allow retail businesses to purchase or use broken eggs or eggs with dirty or cracked shells because this increases the risk of contamination and illness.

Businesses should try to use alternatives to raw eggs in foods which are not cooked. Alternatives include commercially produced dressings and sauces, or pasteurised egg products.

If businesses continue to use raw egg foods, special attention must be given to the safe preparation of these products.

Foods that contain raw or lightly cooked eggs need extra care

Large foodborne illness outbreaks have been associated with foods made from raw eggs, including:

- 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, fried ice-cream, some ice-cream and gelato made on the premises
- drinks such as eggnog and egg flip

Food poisoning outbreaks can harm your business

Outbreaks can harm customers, and adversely impact the reputation or trading ability of a business. Raw egg dressings have been responsible for some of the largest foodborne illness outbreaks in NSW.

There are safer alternatives to these products

Egg dressings and sauces made with pasteurised egg pulp are safer than those made from raw eggs. Pasteurisation destroys disease-causing organisms such as *Salmonella*.

- For foods that traditionally contain raw or lightly cooked eggs (eg mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, mousse), use commercially prepared foods instead of making these foods from raw eggs
- Use pasteurised pulp instead of raw eggs as an ingredient in foods that traditionally contain raw or lightly cooked eggs. For example:
  - processed whole eggs, egg whites and egg yolks are available in liquid, frozen or dried forms
  - sugared egg yolk is available for cakes and desserts
  - salted egg yolk is available for mayonnaise and sauces.

If making raw egg products, good food handling is essential

Separating eggs

If *Salmonella* is present on the egg shell, it could be spread throughout the kitchen and onto other foods with your hands. So, to prevent this happening, when separating eggs:

- wash hands before and after handling raw eggs
- do not separate eggs with bare hands
- do not separate eggs using the shell
- preferably use a sanitised egg separator
- use gloved hands with one gloved hand to crack the egg and the other to separate the egg white from the yolk.
- minimise contact between the shell and the contents of the egg when cracking and separating eggs

Process

To stop any *Salmonella* from growing it is important to:

- immediately refrigerate the raw egg dressing at or below 5°C
- use ingredients (where possible) such as lemon juice or vinegar to acidify the raw egg dressings to a pH value at or below 4.2. This should be done using a standard recipe or checking with a pH meter / pH paper. It may be useful to have your process and recipe checked by an expert food technologist.
- Acidifying raw egg dressings and storing them under temperature control is crucial for the safety of these products.

Shelf life

It is best to make dressings and egg mix fresh every day in small tubs, not in bulk. Once eggs are broken for use, immediately use them in food; do not store liquid egg.

Temperature

If the egg dressing is not stored or displayed under temperature control, a documented method for following the '4-hour/2-hour' rule must be implemented: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/industry-sector-requirements/retail-outlets-and-restaurants/four-hour-two-hour/

Sanitation and hygiene

Clean and sanitise equipment used in the manufacture and use of raw egg dressings before and after use.

Use separate, clean and sanitised containers for each batch. Do not top up previously made sauces, mayonnaise or egg butter with newly made ones.

Use storage containers and sauce dispensers that are easily cleaned and sanitised.

Receival of eggs

When buying or receiving eggs, only accept eggs that are:

- clean and not cracked, broken or leaking
- supplied in clean packaging
- correctly labelled (ie with the name of the food, the supplier's name and address, and lot identification or date marking)

Handling and storing eggs safely

Store eggs in their carton at or below 5°C. This will prevent damage and cross contamination during storage, and maintain their freshness.

Do not wash eggs. Washing makes them more susceptible to contamination. Discard dirty, broken and cracked eggs.

Use eggs before their 'best before' date.

Egg definitions

- **Dirty eggs** are those eggs whose shell is contaminated with visible faeces, soil or other matter (eg yolk, albumen, feathers).
- **Broken eggs** are eggs with a cracked shell and a broken shell membrane.
- **Cracked eggs** are eggs with a cracked shell (where a crack is visible by the naked eye or by candling) and an unbroken shell membrane.

More information

- For information on the regulation visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/food-standards-and-requirements/legislation/foodregulation
- Visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406
- For information on the Food Standards Code visit the Food Standards Australia New Zealand's (FSANZ) website at www.foodstandards.gov.au

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.

Note

This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).