

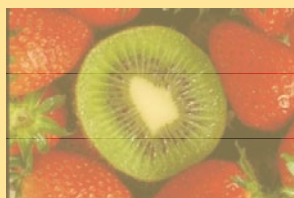
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Consumers Can Resume Enjoying Any Type of Tomatoes

- **Has the warning against eating certain types of tomatoes been removed?**

The FDA has removed the warning to avoid certain types of tomatoes. At this time, there is no reason to believe that tomatoes currently on the market are contaminated with *Salmonella* Saintpaul. Consumers may resume enjoying any type of tomato, including the raw red plum, raw red Roma, and raw red round tomatoes that had been included in the now-removed warning.

- **Why had the FDA warned against eating tomatoes during this outbreak?**

The first case-control study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at the onset of this outbreak did indicate a strong association between the consumption of certain types of fresh tomatoes and illness caused by *Salmonella* Saintpaul.

- **Why is the FDA lifting the warning against certain types of tomatoes?**

Firms that had been producing tomatoes during the onset of the outbreak are no longer doing so, as part of their production cycle. It is very unlikely that any of the batches of tomatoes originally associated with the outbreak are still in the food-supply chain.

Source: US Food & Drug Administration

Salmonella:

Q & A for Consumers

"*Salmonella*" bacteria are the most frequently reported cause of foodborne illness. In order to reduce salmonellosis, a comprehensive farm-to-table approach to food safety is necessary. Farmers, industry, food inspectors, retailers, food service workers, and consumers are each critical links in the food safety chain. This document answers common questions about the bacteria "*Salmonella*," describes how the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is addressing the problems of "*Salmonella*" contamination on meat and poultry products, and offers guidelines for safe food handling to prevent bacteria, such as "*Salmonella*," from causing illness.

Q. What is *Salmonella*?

A. *Salmonella* is a gram-negative, rod-shaped bacilli that can cause diarrheal illness in humans. They are microscopic living creatures that pass from the feces of people or animals to other people or other animals.

The *Salmonella* family includes over 2,300 serotypes of bacteria which are one-celled organisms too small to be seen without a microscope. Two types, *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium are the most common in the United States and account for half of all human infections. Strains that cause no symptoms in animals can make people sick, and vice versa. If present in food, it does not usually affect the taste, smell, or appearance of the food. The bacteria live in the intestinal tracts of infected animals and humans.

Salmonella bacteria have been known to cause illness for over 100 years. They were discovered by an American scientist, Dr. Daniel E. Salmon.

Q. What is salmonellosis?

A. Salmonellosis is an infection caused by the bacteria *Salmonella*. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), salmonellosis causes an estimated 1.4 million cases of foodborne illness and more than 500 deaths annually in the United States. The Surveillance Report from the Food Diseases Active Surveillance ([FoodNet](#)) for 2004, identified *Salmonella* as the most common bacterial infection reported. (42% *Salmonella*, 37% *Campylobacter*, 15% *Shigella*, 2.6% *E. coli* O157:H7, and 3.4% others such as *Yersinia*, *Listeria*, and *Vibrio*).

FoodNet is a collaborative project among CDC, the 10 Emerging Infections Program sites (EPIs), USDA, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). One of the objectives of FoodNet is to measure effectiveness of a variety of preventive measures in reducing the incidence of foodborne illness attributable to the consumption of meat, poultry, and other foods.

Q. What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

A. Most people experience diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever within 8 to 72 hours after the contaminated food was eaten. Additional symptoms may be chills, headache, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms usually disappear within 4 to 7 days. Many people with salmonellosis recover without treatment and may never see a doctor. However, *Salmonella* infections can be life-threatening especially for infants and young children, pregnant women and their unborn babies, and older adults, who are at a higher risk for foodborne illness, as are people with weakened immune systems (such as those with HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, and transplant patients).

Q. Are there long-term consequences?

A. Persons with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal. A small number of persons who are infected with *Salmonella* may develop pains in their joints, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination. This is called Reiter's syndrome. It can last for months or years and can lead to chronic arthritis that is difficult to treat.

Q. How do people get salmonellosis?

A. *Salmonella* lives in the intestinal track of humans and other animals, including birds. *Salmonella* is usually transmitted to humans by eating foods contaminated with animal feces. *Salmonella* present on raw meat and poultry could survive if the product is not cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature, as measured with a food thermometer.

Salmonella can also cause foodborne illness (salmonellosis) through cross-contamination, e.g., when juices from raw meat or poultry come in contact with ready-to-eat foods, such as salads.

Food may also become contaminated by the unwashed hands of an infected food handler. *Salmonella* can also be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea. People can become infected if they do not wash their hands after contact with these feces. Reptiles are particularly likely to harbor *Salmonella*. People should always wash their hands immediately after handling a reptile, even if the reptile is healthy.

Q. What foods are most likely to make people sick?

A. Any raw food of animal origin, such as meat, poultry, milk and dairy products, eggs, seafood, and some fruits and vegetables may carry *Salmonella* bacteria. The bacteria can survive to cause illness if meat, poultry, and egg products are not cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature as measured with a food thermometer and fruits and vegetables are not thoroughly washed. The bacteria can also contaminate other foods that come in contact with raw meat and poultry. Safe food handling practices are necessary to prevent bacteria on raw food from causing illness.

Are chickens labeled "Kosher," "free-range," "organic," or "natural" lower in *Salmonella* bacteria?

A. FSIS does not know of any valid scientific information that shows that any specific type of chicken has more or less *Salmonella* bacteria than other poultry.

Q. What is FSIS doing to prevent *Salmonella* contamination?

A. The Food Safety and Inspection Service is the public health regulatory Agency in the USDA responsible for the safety of the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry and egg products. As part of this responsibility, FSIS issued the "Pathogen Reduction; Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP) Systems, Final Rule" in 1996. This rule sets *Salmonella* performance standards for establishments slaughtering selected classes of food animals or those producing selected classes of raw ground products to verify that industry systems are effective in controlling the contamination of raw meat and poultry products with disease-causing bacteria, like *Salmonella*.

FSIS inspectors make sure the establishments are meeting the standards by collecting randomly selected product samples and submitting them to an FSIS laboratory for *Salmonella* analysis. FSIS requires all plants to reduce bacteria by means of the PR/HACCP system.

Q. How can consumers prevent salmonellosis?

A. Bacteria on raw foods of animal origin do not have to cause illness. The key to preventing illness at home, in a restaurant, at a church picnic, or anywhere else is to prevent the bacteria from growing to high levels and to destroy the bacteria through cooking to a safe minimum internal temperature. Follow these guidelines for safe food preparation:

CLEAN: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often

- Wash your hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets.
- Wash utensils, cutting boards, dishes, and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next item.
- Consider using paper towels to clean kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

SEPARATE: Don't Cross-contaminate

- Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.
- If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Always wash cutting boards, dishes, countertops, and utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

COOK: Cook to Safe Temperatures

Use a clean food thermometer when measuring the internal temperature of meat, poultry, casseroles, and other foods to make sure they have reached a safe minimum internal temperature:

- Beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts, and chops to 145 °F.
- All cuts of pork to 160 °F.
- Ground beef, veal and lamb to 160 °F.
- Egg dishes, casseroles to 160 °F.
- All poultry should reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.
- Stuffed poultry is not recommended. Cook stuffing separately to 165 °F.
- Leftovers to 165 °F.
- Fish should reach 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravy to a boil when reheating.
- Reheat other leftovers thoroughly to at least 165 °F.

CHILL: Refrigerate Promptly

- Keep food safe at home, refrigerate promptly and properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within 2 hours (1 hour if temperatures are above 90 °F).
- Freezers should register 0 °F or below and refrigerators 40 °F or below.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Foods should not be thawed at room temperature. Foods thawed in the microwave or in cold water must be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature before refrigerating.
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- Don't pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.

Source: Center for Disease Control: website:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/salmonellosis_g.htm

9 “Bites” for Better-Tasting Fruits & Veggies

Use these preparation and storage “bites” to enjoy the abundant summer produce at its peak of flavor, appearance and safety!

Bite 1. Prevent cut fruit from turning brown.

Keep cut fruits, such as apples, pears, bananas and peaches, from turning brown by coating them with an acidic juice such as lemon, orange or pineapple juice. Or use a commercial anti-darkening preparation with fruits, such as Fruit-Fresh®, and follow the manufacturer's directions.

Another method to prevent browning is to mix them with acidic fruits like oranges, tangerines, grapefruit and other citrus fruit or pineapple. Prepare the acidic fruit(s) first. Then, cut the other fruits, mixing them with in the acidic fruit(s) as you prepare them.

Cut fruits as close to serving time as possible. Cover and refrigerate cut fruit until ready to serve. Refrigerate peeled/cut fruits and vegetables so they are at room temperature no longer than 2 hours, TOTAL time.

Bite 2. Make the most of your melon baller.

Melon ballers, those little kitchen gadget with a scoop at each end of a handle about 6 inches long, can save valuable time in preparing fruits and veggies. Even if you never make melon balls, use a melon baller to:

- Core apples and pears.
- Cut away the inner membrane from peppers.
- Scoop out the inside of a cherry tomato and make tiny stuffed appetizers. Try stuffing the tomatoes with your favorite tuna salad sandwich mixture.
- Remove seeds and surrounding pulp from fruits and veggies like cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini papaya and kiwi.
- Scoop out the insides of potatoes for twice-baked potatoes

Bite 3. Take a salad spinner for a spin!

Salad dressing slides off damp salad greens and collects in the bottom of the salad bowl. You'll get more flavor with less dressing (and fewer calories!) if salad greens are washed and dried before tossing your salad with dressing. A tablespoon of an oil and vinegar dressing may be all it takes for two cups of dried salad greens.

The easiest and **quickest** way to dry salad greens is in a salad spinner.

A salad spinner uses centrifugal force to remove water from freshly washed salad greens and herbs. Your wet greens are placed in a perforated basket that fits in a larger outer bowl. The bowl is covered with a lid that has a gear-operated handle, pull-cord or knob that you pump to turn the inner basket and spin the water off into the outer bowl.

Pack greens lightly to avoid overcrowding and bruising them. After spinning, pat off any remaining moisture with clean paper towels.

When purchasing a salad spinner, take it for a spin at the store! You want a model that is sturdy, has a well-fitting lid and spins easily. Choose a model large enough so you don't have to go through several "spin cycles" to dry all your greens.

A salad spinner also may be used to dry washed clusters of grapes. Note: If you are preparing small clusters of grapes for garnishing, cut the clusters with scissors. This helps keep the grapes attached to the stem.

Bite 4. Do this with radishes before refrigeration.

If the leafy radish tops are attached, remove them before storing. Radishes don't keep as well if their tops are left on. Store unwashed radishes in an open or perforated plastic bag in a refrigerator crisper drawer that is separate from the one in which you store fruits. Wash radishes and trim their roots just before using.

Bite 5. Wash fruits and vegetables correctly.

The Food and Drug Administration recommend the following preparation tips for fresh produce:

- Many pre-cut, bagged produce items like lettuce are pre-washed. If so, it will be stated on the packaging. This pre-washed, bagged produce can be used without further washing.
- As an extra measure of caution, you can wash the produce again just before you use it. Pre-cut or pre-washed produce in open bags should be washed before using.
- Begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce.
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.
- All unpacked fruits and vegetables, as well as those packaged and not marked pre-washed, should be thoroughly washed before eating. This suggestion includes produce grown conventionally or organically at home, or produce that is purchased from a grocery store or farmer's market. **Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting, or cooking.**
- Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first.
- Washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes is not recommended.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- Drying produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel may further reduce bacteria that may be present.

Bite 6. Separate fruits and vegetables from these foods.

“Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood - and from kitchen utensils used for those products,” advises the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). FDA gives these additional recommendations (http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2007/207_foodsafety.html, retrieved 6/30/2008):

- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, and seafood products and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked.
- For added protection, kitchen sanitizers can be used on cutting boards and countertops periodically. Try a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach to one quart of water.
- If you use plastic or other nonporous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher.

Bite 7. Keep fruits and vegetables separate in the refrigerator.

Store fruits in a refrigerator crisper drawer separate from the one in which you store vegetables. Fruits give off ethylene gas which can shorten the storage life of vegetables. Some vegetables give off odors that can be absorbed by fruits and affect their quality.

Bite 8. Know which fruits ripen after they're picked.

Apricots, bananas, cantaloupe, kiwi, nectarines, peaches, pears, plantains and plums continue to ripen after they're picked. The tomato, which is actually a fruit, also continues to ripen after picking.

Fruits that you should pick or buy ripe and ready-to-eat include: apples, cherries, grapefruit, grapes, oranges, pineapple, strawberries, tangerines and watermelon.

To speed the ripening of fruits such as peaches, pears, and plums, put them in a ripening bowl or in a loosely closed **brown paper bag** at room temperature. Plastic bags don't work for ripening.

Bite 9: Refrigerate fruits and vegetables in perforated plastic bags.

This helps maintain moisture yet provides for air flow. Unperforated plastic bags can lead to the growth of mold or bacteria. If you don't have access to commercial, food-grade, perforated bags, use a sharp object to make several small holes in a food-grade plastic bag (about 20 holes per medium-size bag).

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln: <http://lancaster.unl.edu>

Florida Food Fare

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Blueberries

Description: This popular little sapphire-colored berry has been around for thousands of years and was once called “star berry” by the native tribes of North America, because of the star-shaped calyx on the top of each berry. Blueberry is one of the few cultivated fruit crops that is native to North America and 95% of the world’s commercial crop comes from the U.S. and Canada. Though there are many varieties of blueberries available to fruit growers, amateurs and professionals alike, only two varieties are suitable for the climate in Florida. The two cultivars that are adapted to the mild Florida winters are: rabbiteye and southern highbush.

Nutritional Value: Blueberries contain no cholesterol, fat or sodium and are a good source of Vitamins A, C, fiber, iron and potassium. They are low in calories and contain antioxidants that help in the prevention of various forms of cancer. They also contain a compound called proanthocyanidins which appears to help in the prevention of bacterial infections in the kidney and bladder. One cup of blueberries contains 81 calories, 3.9g dietary fiber, 129mg potassium, 18.8mg vitamin C and 145 IU vitamin A.

Selection and Storage: Look for fresh blueberries that are firm, dry and plump, smooth skinned and relatively free from stems and leaves. Size is not an indicator of maturity, but color is. Berries should be deep purple-blue to blue-black. Reddish berries are not ripe but may be used in cooking. Stay away from containers with juice stains which may be a sign that the berries are crushed and possibly moldy. Soft watery fruit means the berries are overripe. Dehydrated, wrinkled fruit means the berries have been stored too long. Handle your blueberries with care, touching them as little as possible. Fresh berries should be refrigerated immediately, covered and washed just before using. Use within 10 days of purchase.

Preparation and Use: Fresh blueberries are a favorite snack eaten out of hand or mixed with fresh fruits and nuts. They are a natural companion for dairy products and who can resist a fresh blueberry muffin, coffee cake or blueberry pancakes for breakfast? Mix with cardamom cinnamon, ginger, mace or nutmeg to make a flavorful sauce or salsa to accompany pork, chicken or game. And don’t forget the ever-popular blueberry pie and blueberry cobbler.

Recipe: Blueberry Walnut Salad

1 (10 oz.) package mixed salad greens	1/4 cup low fat feta cheese, crumbled
1 pint fresh blueberries, washed	Low fat raspberry vinaigrette salad dressing
1/4 cup toasted walnuts	Pinch of salt to taste

In a large bowl, toss salad greens with blueberries and walnuts. Drizzle with vinaigrette and top with feta cheese. Serve immediately. Serves 6.