



# FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

## Molds on Food: Are They Dangerous?

Some molds cause allergic reactions and respiratory problems. A few molds, in the right conditions, produce "mycotoxins," poisonous substances that can make people sick. For your health and safety, it is important to understand a little about molds.

Molds can grow in the refrigerator. They can also tolerate salt and sugar better than most other food invaders. Therefore, molds can grow in refrigerated jams and jelly and on cured, salty meats—ham, bacon, salami, and bologna.

*(See reverse side for more information on molds.)*

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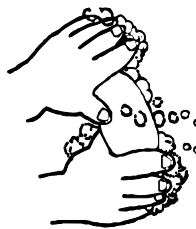
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**Sources:**  
USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline  
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2001 Food Safety Survey  
[www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov)

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## Survey Shows Consumers Improve Food Safety Practices

Results released Sept. 18, 2002 of the food safety survey conducted by FDA and FSIS show that consumers continue to improve their food safety practices. The survey asked how consumers clean their hands and cutting surfaces after touching or cutting raw fish, meat or poultry. Consumers were also asked whether they eat several different raw or undercooked foods from animals, including pink hamburgers, steak tartar, and raw oysters, clams, fish, and eggs.

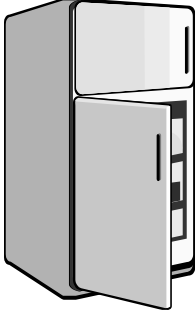


Compare your own practices with the percentages of consumers who do the following:

- Not wash your hands after touching raw meat: 15%
- Not washing cutting board after touching raw meat: 13%
- Not washing hands after touching raw fish: 10%
- Not washing hands after cracking eggs: 55%
- Not washing cutting board after cutting raw fish: 4%
- Not washing hands before preparing the meal: 29%
- Eat raw clams: 6%
- Eating raw oysters: 12%
- Eating raw fish: 15%
- Eating raw eggs: 42%
- Eating steak tartar: 4%
- Eating pink hamburger: 16%

## How Can You Minimize Mold Growth?

Cleanliness is vital in controlling mold. Mold spores from affected food can build up in your refrigerator, dishcloths, and other cleaning utensils. Remember to:



1. Clean the inside of the refrigerator every few months with 1 tablespoon of baking soda dissolved in a quart of water. Rinse with clear water and dry. Scrub visible mold (usually black) on rubber casing using 3 teaspoons of bleach in a quart of water.
2. Keep dishcloths, towels, sponges, and mops clean and fresh. A musty smell mean they're spreading mold around. Discard items you can't clean or launder.
3. Keep the humidity level in the house below 40%.

## How Should You Handle Food with Mold on It?

Buying small amounts and using food quickly can help prevent mold growth. But when you see moldy food:

- Don't sniff the moldy item. This can cause respiratory trouble.
- If food is covered with mold, discard it. Put it into a small paper bag or wrap it in plastic and dispose in a covered trash can that children and animals can't get into.
- Clean the refrigerator or pantry at the spot where the food was stored.
- Check nearby items the moldy food might have touched. Mold spreads quickly in fruits and vegetables.
- See the attached chart "Moldy Food: When to Use, When to Discard."

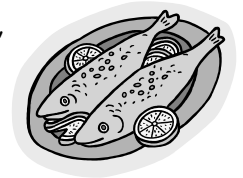
## Ceviche.....Is It Safe Because It Was "Cooked" in Lime Juice?

Ceviche is raw fish or shellfish that has been marinated in citrus, usually lime juice. The acid in the lime juice changes the protein in the fish much like cooking does. Thus the fish is often described as being "cooked" in lime juice.

This marinating does not eliminate the risk of bacteria and parasites as cooking with heat can. The FDA recommends that any fish that is going to be eaten raw first be frozen to below -31 degrees for 15 hours to eliminate the risk from

parasites that may be present in the fish.

In addition to freezing raw fish before it is served, general food safety principles such as proper storage, thawing, handling and preparation must be applied to prevent bacterial contamination. If you eat raw fish, be aware of how it is handled and prepared, and exercise caution in situations where there are concerns about food (or fish) safety.



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## Moldy Food: When to Use, When to Discard

*Note: Anyone who is knowingly allergic to molds should discard the entire food item containing mold.*

FOOD	HANDLING	REASON
<b>Luncheon meats, bacon, or hot dogs</b>	Discard	Foods with high moisture content can be contaminated below the surface. Moldy foods may also have bacteria growing along with the mold.
<b>Hard salami and dry-cured country hams</b>	Use. Scrub mold off surface.	It is normal for these shelf-stable products to have surface mold.
<b>Cooked leftover meat and poultry</b>	Discard	Foods with high moisture content can be contaminated below the surface. Moldy foods may also have bacteria growing along with the mold.
<b>Cooked casseroles</b>	Discard	Foods with high moisture content can be contaminated below the surface. Moldy foods may also have bacteria growing along with the mold.
<b>Cooked grain and pasta</b>	Discard	Foods with high moisture content can be contaminated below the surface. Moldy foods may also have bacteria growing along with the mold.
<b>Hard cheese</b> (not cheese where mold is part of the processing)	Use. Cut off at least 1 inch around and below the mold spot (keep the knife out of the mold itself so it will not cross-contaminate other parts of the cheese). After trimming off the mold, re-cover the cheese in fresh wrap.	Mold generally cannot penetrate deep into the product.
<b>Cheese made with mold</b> (such as Roquefort, blue, Gorgonzola, Stilton, Brie, Camembert)	Discard soft cheeses such as Brie and Camembert if they contain molds that are not a part of the manufacturing process.  If surface mold is on hard cheeses such as Gorgonzola and Stilton, cut off mold at least 1 inch around and below the mold spot and handle like hard cheese (above).	Molds that are not a part of the manufacturing process can be dangerous.
<b>Soft cheese</b> (such as cottage, cream cheese, Neufchatel, <i>chevre</i> , Bel Paese, etc.) <b>Crumbled, shredded, and sliced cheeses</b> (all types)	Discard	Foods with high moisture content can be contaminated below the surface. Shredded, sliced, or crumbled cheese can be contaminated by the cutting instrument. Moldy soft cheese can also have bacteria growing along with the mold.
<b>Yogurt and sour cream</b>	Discard	Foods with high moisture content can be contaminated below the surface. Moldy foods may also have bacteria growing along with the mold.
<b>Jams and jellies</b>	Discard	The mold could be producing a mycotoxin. Microbiologists recommend against scooping out the mold and using the remaining condiment.
<b>Fruits and vegetables, firm</b>	Use. Cut off at least 1 inch around and below the mold spot (keep the knife out of the mold itself so it will not cross-contaminate other parts of the produce).	Small mold spots can be cut off fruits and vegetables with low moisture content (cabbage, bell peppers, carrots, etc.). It's difficult for mold to penetrate dense foods.
<b>Fruits and vegetables, soft</b>	Discard	Fruits and vegetables with high moisture content (cucumbers, peaches, tomatoes, etc.) can be contaminated below the surface.
<b>Bread and baked goods</b>	Discard	Porous foods can be contaminated below the surface.
<b>Peanut butter, legumes and nuts</b>	Discard	Foods processed without preservatives are at high risk for mold.