

Serving Up Food Safety



From the Food Safety Education
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Foraging for Mushrooms this Spring?

“It's that time of year again, Spring! Gathering wild mushrooms from the woods, or foraging, is a popular activity, but it is critical to make sure the mushrooms are not poisonous before eating them. Eating mushrooms gathered in the wild can make people very sick, causing serious illness or death. People should not eat wild mushrooms unless an expert identifies them as safe.

A new CDC report shows that accidental mushroom poisoning causes nearly 1,400 emergency department visits every year. The report found that 9% of patients experience serious health problems such as an irregular heartbeat, kidney or liver failure, and seizures.”

What are the implications for food service workers and consumers?

Wild mushrooms should not be used or consumed unless identified by an expert and purchased from an approved source. Establishments and educators should continue to learn and educate themselves about the potential dangers of the consumption of poisonous wild mushrooms.

What should an establishment do if they want to sell or use wild-harvested mushrooms?

It is recommended any establishment wanting to use or sell wild-harvested mushrooms contact their local regulatory authority for specific rules and regulations.



Sources and more information:

https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/newsletter/poisonous_mushrooms.html

Gold JA, Kiernan E, Yeh M, Jackson BR, Benedict K. Health Care Utilization and Outcomes Associated with Accidental Poisonous Mushroom Ingestions — United States, 2016–2018. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2021;70:337–341. DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7010a1external icon>

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/foodestablishments/pdf/GuidanceDocs/E23-14686GuidanceDocMushroom.pdf>



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Safe Food Handling with Specialty Devices

Have you heard of thawing trays or solar box cooking? There are many consumer products used to thaw, cook, determine doneness, or warm food when not at home. But as with other kitchen devices or equipment, food must be handled safely to ensure your health and wellness.

A **thawing tray** is made of superconductive metal alloys that allow frozen food to thaw rapidly and at room temperature without energy or chemicals.

Handle the food properly; the surface of the food must lay flat on the tray and food size, shape, and thickness must be taken into account. Raw meats and poultry should not remain at room temperature for more than 2 hours or 1 hour if the temperature is above 90°F. Thawed food may be cooked immediately or refrigerated for only 1-2 days. After use, always wash with hot soapy water to prevent cross-contamination.

Solar Box Cooking uses sunlight to cook food. The box has a top window that allows sunlight through. There is a dark covered pot placed at the bottom of the box; that absorbs sunlight and converts to heat. USDA microbiologists question the adequacy of cooking temperatures inside the solar cooker. It is uncertain how long the food will be in the "danger zone", the temperature between 40-140°F. The concern is how long it takes the food to start cooking and how hot the cooking temperature becomes. The box temperature and food temperature would need to be measured during the cooking process. Even if solar box cooking proves reliable in summer, there is still the issue of winter use or on cloudy days. Consumers attempting to use a Solar Box, proceed with caution and use an accurate thermometer to confirm safe cooking temperatures were achieved.

There are numerous consumer specialty products on the market - thawing trays, solar cooking boxes, disposable temperature indicators, thermoelectric cooler/warmer, tabletop ovens, the Big Green Egg, or Big Easy Oil-less turkey fryers just to list a few.

Always research the use and safety of products you will use related to food preparation. Handle the food safely and follow the Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill steps of food safety!



Solar Box Cooker

Source: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/ffsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/appliances-and-thermometers/specialty-devices-and-safe-food-handling/ct_index

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