

How to Prepare and Cook Vegetables Safely

Vegetables are essential to a healthy diet; however, many businesses responsible for serving food often overlook the risks associated with the preparation and cooking of the food group. Care and consideration must be made from the farm to plate to ensure that patrons are protected against food-borne illnesses.



Top tips to prepare and cook vegetables safely

Purchase

The safe sourcing of vegetables is a vital first step. Key considerations when purchasing vegetables include:

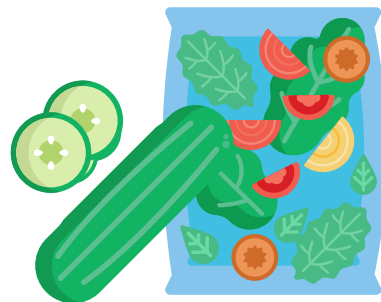
- Avoiding damaged vegetables, such as when skin is broken or mouldy
- If the vegetables require refrigeration, such as mushrooms, check that it has been stored correctly
- If possible research what pesticides have been used for the vegetables at the farm
- Check the use-by dates on pre-cut or packaged products



Storage

Ensuring that vegetables are stored appropriately to preserve their freshness is essential. Storage tips include:

- Immediately refrigerate pre-cut or packaged products on arrival to the kitchen
- Store cut vegetables for a maximum of 2-3 days
- Separate vegetables from other food groups such as meats or poultry
- Excess vegetables can be frozen after they are cut and blanched in boiling water



Preparation

Vegetables require careful preparation to minimise the spread of bacteria. Follow these tips for the preparation phase.

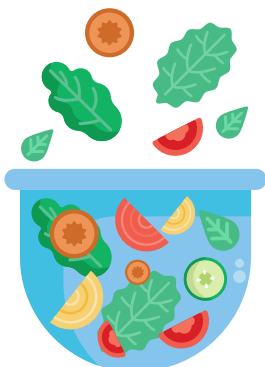
- Wash all vegetables thoroughly with water to remove external bacteria
- Wash your hands or utensils after handling visibly dirty vegetables
- Use a scrubbing brush to remove loose dirt on vegetables such as potatoes or carrot
- Before using pre-cut vegetables such as salad greens, check that they have been washed and sanitised during processing to avoid double handling



Serving

Once vegetables have left the kitchen or premises, it is best to follow safe serving guidelines to avoid the growth of bacteria.

- Refrigerate cooked vegetables within one to two hours using clean, shallow containers
- Keep uncooked vegetables such as salads out of the heat and dispose of if left outside for more than two hours



Cooking

Once prepared, vegetables must be cooked following specific instructions to protect customers from harm.

- When serving raw vegetables such as salads, ensure that unsafe ingredients such as raw sprouts are avoided
- Some vegetables should never be served raw, such as potatoes, mushrooms and eggplant; therefore, ensure these are entirely cooked before serving
- Ensure that frozen vegetables are cooked thoroughly before serving to ensure bacteria is eliminated



Eating

Some groups of people are at a higher risk of food poisoning, including children, pregnant women, the elderly or those who are immunocompromised. These people should avoid:

- Pre-packaged salads which may contain a listeria contamination
- Rockmelon, which may include a listeria contamination
- Bean sprouts which may have a salmonella contamination
- Other uncooked sprouts such as alfalfa which grows in dangerous bacteria-forming conditions

