

Eat Cooked Food Only



Food Safety In Relation to Hotpot Cooking

People in Hong Kong love hotpot cooking especially during winter for keeping warm. However many people do not wait until the food is done. They think that they are strong enough to cope with the bacteria. But instead, they take in pathogens such as *Escherichia coli*, *Vibrio cholerae*, hepatitis A virus or parasites with the food. To avoid food poisoning, cholera, hepatitis A, parasitic infections and other foodborne diseases, please follow the three steps below :

1. Choose materials carefully

Hotpot usually involves a mixture of meat, vegetables and seafood. When you look out for your choices, you should :

- Go for reputable shops instead of illegal hawkers;
- Read the label of prepackaged food to skip expired ones; and
- See whether the container and water for holding seafood are clean. Do not buy any shellfish with abnormal odour and non-intact shells.



2. Be alert at preparation

All hotpot materials may need to be defrosted, washed, cut, chilled etc. before cooking. The following basic hygiene principles should be observed during the process of preparation :

- Pay attention to personal hygiene : wash hands thoroughly before food preparation/after visiting the washroom and handling refuse. Stop preparing food when you feel sick;
- Do not defrost food in room temperature to avoid bacterial multiplication. Thawing should be carried out in a refrigerator at a temperature between 0°C and 4°C or inside a microwave oven;
- Wash food thoroughly, especially the vegetables. To prevent pesticide-tainted vegetable poisoning, remember to remove the outer leaves, wash the vegetables well, soak them in clean water for about an hour and wash again before cooking;





- Slice fish and meat and cut beef balls and pork balls etc. to the centre to allow thorough cooking;
- Handle shellfish with care. Scrub and rinse shellfish thoroughly. Remove the viscera as well as the shells before cooking; and



- Store foods properly. Fresh or thawed-out fish, meat and other perishable food should be stored in a refrigerator at a temperature of 4°C or below. They should be processed as soon as possible to avoid contamination. Foods such as vegetables should be covered to keep clean.

3. Keep an eye on food hygiene

Pay attention to the hygiene of food and utensils used for hotpot cooking, especially in the following areas:



- Use two separate sets of chopsticks and eating ware, preferably with different appearances, to handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross contamination;

- Add food to boiling water only, especially after topping up with unboiled water;



- Eat only done food. Shrimps must not be eaten when they are only barely cooked. They should be cooked until the shells turn red. Avoid eating the heads. Shucked oysters should be cooked at boiling temperature for not less than three minutes before eating;

- Different foods require different cooking temperatures and cooking time. Therefore for food safety reason, divide foods by type for cooking in hotpot;



- Do not eat raw eggs or the mixture of raw eggs and sauces to season cooked food to avoid Salmonella food poisoning. The vulnerable group including the elderly, children and pregnant women have to be more careful; and

- Do not eat too much, especially coral reef food fish and shellfish. Eat only a little to avoid ciguatera fish poisoning and paralytic shellfish poisoning.



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