



Food Safety Tips for Rockmelons

Trade Consultation Forum

4 Apr 2018

Food Safety Incident – *Listeria* in Rockmelons

- Announced on 6 Mar 2018:
 - Rockmelons produced in New South Wales, Australia might have been contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*
- Food alerts were issued.

Listeria monocytogenes

- Ubiquitous in the environment
- Can survive and multiply at refrigerator temperature
- Mild symptoms in most healthy individuals but severe complications may occur in newborns, the elderly and those with a weaker immune system
- In infected pregnant women, the infection of *Listeria monocytogenes* may cause miscarriage, infant death, preterm birth, or severe infection in newborns.

Other Pathogens

- Melons: Cantaloupe, watermelon and honeydew; previous outbreaks caused by *Salmonella* spp.
- The netted varieties of cantaloupe either alone or mixed with other melons and other food in meal/dishes is the most common melon type in recorded outbreaks.
- Netted melon rind surfaces, in contrast to smooth rind surfaces, may foster greater attachment and survival of food-borne pathogens.



Contamination of Melons

- According to Codex, major risk factors:
 - Contaminated irrigation water
 - Infected food handlers
 - Poor personal hygiene
 - Poor temperature control (including extended holding at ambient temperature and poor cold storage)
 - Inappropriate food contact surfaces
 - Inadequate building/equipment sanitation

- Beware of cross-contamination !

Infiltration of Microbial Pathogens

- Post-harvest water use (during primary production):
 - If the temperature of the water in the dump tank is cold and the internal temperature of the melons is hot from field heat, a temperature differential is created that may aid in the infiltration of microbial pathogens into the rind and/or the edible portion of the fruit.

Cutting, Slicing and Peeling Melons

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling fresh fruits.
- Cut away any bruised areas on fresh fruits before preparing and/or eating. Discard any rotten fresh fruits.
- Before peeling, cutting and eating, wash fresh fruits (including those with skins and rinds that are not to be eaten) thoroughly under running tap water to remove any lingering dirt. This reduces microorganisms that may be present.

Cutting, Slicing and Peeling Melons (Cont' d)

- Rub firm-skin fruits, e.g. melons, under running tap water or scrub with a clean produce brush while rinsing with water.
- Do not use soap or detergent to wash.
- Dry produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to further reduce microorganisms that may be present.
- Pre-cut melons should be wrapped/packaged and refrigerated as soon as possible and distributed under refrigeration temperatures (i.e. 4 °C or less).

CODEX Code of Hygienic Practice

- Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (CAC/RCP 53-2003)
- The Annexes are supplements to the Code and include additional recommendations to cover hygienic practices specific to these commodities:
 - Ready-to-Eat, Fresh, Pre-cut Fruits and Vegetables (Annex I)
 - Sprout Production (Annex II)
 - Fresh Leafy Vegetables (Annex III)
 - Melons (Annex IV)
 - Berries (Annex V)

For further information

- http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fm_01_11.html
- A Guide to Foodservice and Retails -- Guidelines on Hygienic Preparation and Handling of Pre-cut Fruits (PDF)
- Food Safety Tips for Fruits and Fruit Products

A Guide to Foodservice and Retails Guidelines on hygienic preparation and handling of pre-cut fruits



For further information

- <https://goo.gl/uBu5wS>



A Guide to Foodservice and Retailers Guidelines on hygienic preparation and handling of pre-cut fruits





THANK YOU

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