



Fact Sheet

FOOD SAFETY FACTS ON FLOODING

Handling and preparing food is always important in preventing foodborne illness, but the occurrence of a flood may cause damage that could increase the risk of foodborne illness. Follow these safe food handling tips during and after a flood:

General food safety tips on flooding

- After a flood, the best thing to do is throw away any food (including packaged food) that has been contaminated by the flood water. Even if the food appears to be dry it still may not be safe.
- Throw away all meats, fish, poultry, fresh fruits and vegetables that have come in contact with flood water. As well, food in glass or plastic jars and bottles may be unsafe as the flood water may seep into the lids of these containers and may contaminate the food.
- Inspect food carefully after a flood. Contamination can occur if bacteria in flood water come in contact with food.
- Only food in sealed, airtight metal cans is entirely safe, however, the cans must be carefully cleaned and disinfected before use.
- Cans can be cleaned by washing them in a strong detergent solution and then immersing them in a mild bleach and water solution (5ml/1 tsp. bleach per 750 ml/3 cups water), for 2 minutes to prevent potential contamination when the can is opened.
- Cans that are bulging or damaged are considered unsafe and unusable and should be thrown away immediately.
- Home canned foods in glass containers that have come in contact with flood water are not safe. Throw away the food and the flat part of the lid. The empty jars can be sterilized for future use.

Sanitize

- It is best to sanitize all equipment that has come into contact with flood water in very hot water, 77°C (170° F).
- Sanitize wood or plastic cutting boards and your counter top with a mild bleach solution (5 ml/1 tsp. bleach per 750 ml/3 cups water).
- Slicing or grinding machines must also be cleaned and disinfected before you use them to ensure that no bacteria remain on the surface of the equipment.

Drying equipment

- The most important final step is to allow surfaces and equipment to air dry when putting away clean equipment.
- Do not lay one wet cutting board on top of another. Bacteria may multiply in trapped water.
- Allow all utensils and dishes to air dry before they are put away.
- If you suspect that your equipment and utensils have become contaminated during storage, clean and sanitize them just prior to use, even though you may have already cleaned, or sanitized them.

For more information on foodborne illness and safe food handling practices, visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at www.inspection.gc.ca