

Food Code Fact Sheet #12

What you should know about the Code

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Cut Tomatoes

OAR 333-150-0000, CHAPTER 1-201.10(B)

Definition of "Time/temperature control for safety food" means a food that requires time/temperature control for safety (TCS) to limit pathogenic micro-organism growth or toxin formation.

PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS:

Historically, uncooked fruits and vegetables have been considered non-TCS unless they were epidemiologically implicated in foodborne illness outbreaks and are capable of supporting the growth of pathogenic bacteria in the absence of temperature control. Since 1990, at least 12 multi-state foodborne illness outbreaks have been associated with different varieties of tomatoes. From 1998 – 2006, outbreaks associated with tomatoes made up 17% of the produce-related outbreaks reported to FDA. *Salmonella* has been the pathogen of concern most often associated with tomato outbreaks. Recommendations are being offered to prevent contamination in food service facilities and retail food stores and to reduce the growth of pathogenic bacteria when contamination of fresh tomatoes may have already occurred (regardless of the location where the contamination occurred).

Recent foodborne illness outbreaks have been associated with different varieties of cut tomatoes contaminated with pathogens, specifically *Salmonella*.

The Oregon Food Sanitation Rules have designated cut tomatoes as a potentially hazardous food that must be maintained at temperatures of 41°F (5°C) or less or hot held at 135°F (57°C) or above.

The following tomato and tomato products will need to be maintained under safe temperature controls:

- Sliced, diced, or chopped fresh tomatoes
- Cut tomatoes used as an ingredient in another food such as salsa, salads, guacamole, etc.
- Cooked tomatoes and tomatoes
- Commercially canned/processed cooked tomatoes and tomato products upon opening, unless written documentation from the manufacturer proves the product is a non-potentially hazardous food

Onsite acidification at the restaurant to render a food shelf-stable (no temperature requirements) would require a variance from the Oregon Health Authority.

Cut tomatoes should be stored separately from raw, unwashed produce, raw meats and seafood

Fresh cut tomatoes and cooked tomato products must be date-marked and used or discarded within 7 days.

Additional recommendations:

- Avoid using damaged or spoiled tomatoes



Cut tomatoes should be refrigerated immediately.

- Wash whole tomatoes thoroughly under running water. The use of soap or detergents is not recommended
- Refrigerate whole, washed tomatoes before slicing so they are already below 41°F (5°C)