

Preparing Raw Oysters Safely

Vibrio parahaemolyticus (*Vibrio*) are bacteria naturally found in the ocean. These bacteria are present at higher concentrations as water temperatures get warmer. *Vibrio* accumulate in shellfish like oysters, mussels and scallops, particularly in the summer. In Eating raw or undercooked shellfish, like raw oysters, contaminated with *Vibrio*, may cause foodborne illness (nausea, vomiting and diarrhea).

Cooking oysters to an internal temperature of 74°C is the safest way to serve them.

Basic Food Safety Steps when Serving Raw Oysters

1. Obtain oysters from approved suppliers only. Shellfish tags must arrive with each lot. Keep tags for your records for a minimum of 3 months.
2. Check the temperature of the oysters when they arrive. Reject oysters if they arrive above 4 °C, as warmer temperatures may allow *Vibrio* to grow.
3. Keep a record of all shellfish deliveries. Include date, temperature, supplier, type, tag information and lot number.
4. Refrigerate immediately. Store the oysters at 4 °C or lower until just prior to preparation.
5. Only serve fresh live oysters. Live oysters will be tightly closed or will close when the shell is tapped.
6. Prepare raw oysters for consumption as they are ordered.
7. Minimize the amount of time raw oysters are held above 4 °C. For customers that order a large number of raw oysters, have the server bring out only 4 – 6 at a time and replenish as needed. Serve and display raw oysters on a bed of ice.
8. Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after preparing raw oysters. Avoid cross contamination by washing and sanitizing all cutting boards, utensils and counter tops.

To reduce the risk of illness, consumers should be made aware of the increased risk associated with eating raw or undercooked oysters.

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

Edmonton Main Office
Calgary Main Office
Lethbridge Main Office

780-735-1800
403-943-2288
403-388-6689

Grande Prairie Main Office
Red Deer Main Office
www.ahs.ca/eph

780-513-7517
403-356-6366

F-16-004
Created: Oct/16