# Meat, Poultry, Fish and Seafood Safety: Restaurant Safety Meeting Kit




## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Meat, poultry, fish, and seafood are important menu items at restaurants because they provide a good source of protein and essential nutrients for many people.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER

**POTENTIAL HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH MEAT, FISH AND SEAFOOD SAFETY AT RESTAURANT**

**Foodborne illness:** Consuming meat, poultry, fish, or seafood that is not handled or cooked properly can lead to foodborne illness. Symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever.

**Cross-contamination:** Cross-contamination can occur when raw meat, poultry, fish, or seafood comes into contact with other foods or surfaces, potentially transferring harmful bacteria. This can happen during preparation, cooking, or serving.

**Allergies:** For people with food allergies, even a small amount of cross-contamination is dangerous. If restaurant staff do not take proper precautions to avoid cross-contamination, customers with allergies are at risk.

**Chemical contamination:** Meat, poultry, fish, and seafood can be contaminated with chemicals such as antibiotics, pesticides, or heavy metals. These contaminants can be harmful to human health if consumed in large amounts.

**Fraud:** Sometimes, restaurants may mislabel or misrepresent the type or origin of meat, poultry, fish, or seafood, leading to the consumption of lower-quality or even unsafe products.

**PRINCIPAL CONCERNS WHEN DEALING WITH MEAT, POULTRY FISH AND SEAFOOD SAFETY**

**Health:** These foods are good sources of protein, vitamins, and minerals, but they can also be high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium, which can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and other health problems.

**Environment:** The farming of animals for food requires large amounts of land, water, and energy, and can contribute to deforestation, water pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. Overfishing and unsustainable aquaculture practices can also harm marine ecosystems and threaten the survival of certain species.

**Animal welfare:** Many animals are raised in crowded and unsanitary conditions and may be subject to inhumane practices such as confinement, mutilation, and slaughter without anesthesia.

**Cultural and social issues:** Changes to dietary habits can have implications for individual and community identity.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

**PREVENT FOODBORNE ILLNESS FROM MEAT, POULTRY, FISH AND SEAFOOD AT RESTAURANT**

**Purchase from a reputable source:** Make sure to buy meat, poultry, fish, and seafood from a reputable supplier.

**Check for freshness:** Check the sell-by date on the package, and look for signs of freshness, such as bright color and firm texture. If the food has an off odor, it may not be fresh.

**Store properly:** Keep meat, poultry, fish, and seafood refrigerated or frozen until ready to use.

**Cook thoroughly:** Cook meat, poultry, fish, and seafood to the proper internal temperature to kill any harmful bacteria. Use a meat thermometer to ensure that the food has reached a safe temperature.

**Practice good hygiene:** Wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces that come into contact with raw meat, poultry, fish, or seafood to prevent cross-contamination.

**Be aware of food recalls:** Stay informed about food recalls.

**GUIDELINES TO ENSURE SAFETY OF MEAT, POULTRY, FISH AND SEAFOOD AT RESTAURANTS**

- Look for clean and well-maintained facilities. Check the overall cleanliness of the restaurant, including the kitchen, dining area, and restroom.
- Make sure the restaurant has a food safety certification. Check if the restaurant has a food safety certification from a reputable organization such as the National Restaurant Association or the SERV Safe program.
- Check for proper storage and handling of food. Make sure that the restaurant is storing and handling meat, poultry, fish, and seafood properly. They should be kept at the right temperature to prevent spoilage.
- Ask how the food is prepared. Ask the server or chef how the meat, poultry, fish, and seafood are prepared. Make sure they are cooked to the appropriate temperature to kill any harmful bacteria.
- Look for signs of freshness. Check for signs of freshness such as bright colors, firm texture, and no off-odors.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions. If you have any concerns or questions about the safety of the food, don’t hesitate to ask the server or chef.
- When ordering meat, poultry, fish, or seafood, make sure it is cooked thoroughly to the recommended internal temperature. For example, beef should be cooked to 145°F (63°C), poultry to 165°F (74°C), and fish to 145°F (63°C).
- Pay attention to how the food is handled and prepared. Make sure the restaurant staff uses separate cutting boards, knives, and other utensils for raw meat, poultry, fish, and seafood. Cross-contamination can lead to foodborne illness.
- Check the color and texture of the meat, poultry, fish, or seafood. It should be firm, not slimy or discolored. If it looks or smells off, don’t eat it.
- If you have any food allergies or dietary restrictions, make sure the restaurant staff is aware and takes precautions to avoid cross-contamination.

- If you have any concerns about the safety of the food, don’t hesitate to ask the restaurant staff.

## FINAL WORD

It is important for restaurants to take proper precautions to minimize these hazards and ensure the safety of their customers. This includes proper training of staff, following food safety guidelines and regulations.