



Shop with food safety in mind

Food companies and retailers seek to maintain food safety standards to ensure that you can buy the very best. New food safety regulations in Australia will help to make the safety of the food you buy even better. But there are some signs you can look for yourself to ensure you buy a safe product. Once you buy the food, it's up to you to make sure that it stays safe.

Choosing your supermarket

Check for cleanliness in your food shop. Some preparation of the food you buy, such as cutting up meat and preparing foods for the deli bar takes place in areas you can't see. Dirty staff and conditions in public areas may be a clue that things are worse behind the scenes.

Shopping tips

If you have different types of shopping to do, go to the supermarket for your food shopping last.

Shop for non-perishable food first – leave the fridges and freezers to the end of your shopping. Also shop last for hot cooked foods such as BBQ chicken. Keep hot foods separated from frozen and chilled products.

What to look for when shopping

All food retailers and food producers have a responsibility to provide you with safe food. But even so, some things can go wrong.

You should look out for damaged food packaging. This can provide an entry for bacteria. Check the product very carefully. Look for any signs of damage to the packaging. This can indicate that the product might be contaminated with food poisoning bacteria.

Always check the 'use by' dates marked on perishable foods, such as chilled precooked items and only buy foods within their expected shelf life. After that date, although it may look OK, there may have been sufficient time for food poisoning bacteria to grow to numbers that can make you sick. **Remember that unsafe food may still look, smell and taste good.** If in doubt, don't buy it.

Chilled foods need to be kept at a constant low temperature, which can't happen if products are overloaded in supermarket fridges or freezers. Note the black line in the fridges with the words 'load limit' written on it. Retailers should never have any product above or in front of this line. If a product is labelled as 'keep refrigerated' or '

keep chilled' and is not in chilled storage, don't buy it and alert the store manager to this situation.

When buying food from the deli counter, ensure staff use separate tongs or gloves for raw and ready-to-eat foods. Avoid shops where cooked or other ready-to-eat food (eg seafood, cooked poultry or deli meats) are displayed adjacent to raw products or are served with the same utensils used for the raw products. If you have serious concerns about food handling in a retail outlet, contact your State health department or local council.

If you get home and then find some evidence of tampering or package damage, return the product to the store or call the manufacturer.

At the check-out

- * Ask the check-out operator to pack raw meats and poultry in a separate bag from other products.
- * Encourage the check-out operator to pack other chilled and frozen items together by placing these items together on the conveyor belt.

Taking your food home

- * If possible, carry your food home in the air-conditioned part of your car in hot weather, not in the boot.
- * Always go directly home - don't leave your shopping in a hot car.
- * If you have to travel for over 30 minutes, it's a good idea to place your chilled and frozen foods into an insulated cooler for the trip home.
- * When you arrive home, immediately pack chilled and frozen products into your refrigerator or freezer.

And for safety's sake remember the 6 key tips.....

- keep hot food steaming hot
- keep cold food refrigerated
- Cook food properly
- Separate raw and cooked foods
- Keep kitchen and utensils clean
- Wash hands with soap and dry thoroughly

Need more information?

Telephone Project Co-ordinator: 0407 626 688
Email: info@foodsafety.asn.au
Website: www.foodsafety.asn.au