



Safe Preparation of Sushi and Sashimi

What is the concern?

Sushi is traditionally made with vinegar rice, seaweed wraps, vegetables, raw seafood, and occasionally cooked seafood. Sashimi is thinly sliced raw seafood. Raw seafood may contain different parasites, viruses, and bacteria which can cause foodborne illness. Therefore, it is important to prepare sushi and sashimi with specific precautions to ensure it is safe to eat.

Safe Food Handling Measures:

- Seafood used in making sushi should be labeled as sushi grade seafood.
- You should never assume that seafood from the grocery store is safe to use – always look for sushi grade labelled seafood.
- Freezing fish for a specific time and at a specific temperature will destroy parasites in the fish making it safer to eat, but there's still risk. Fish that's consumed raw in sushi must be frozen to:
 - -20°C for 7 days, OR
 - -35°C for 15 hours.
- As a restaurant operator you should request and keep documentation showing the fish has been properly treated to ensure all parasites have been destroyed.

Other Considerations:

When preparing sushi dishes, a large amount of food handling is involved from preparing the rice, vegetables, and seafood, to making the dish and preparing the rolls. It's important to be aware of cross-contamination when handling raw and cooked foods.

- Wash hands before handling food and after touching raw food.
- Never handle food if you're feeling ill.
- Keep raw foods separate and away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces and equipment after use.
- Foods which are potentially hazardous must be kept refrigerated when not in use.
- Never defrost frozen foods at room temperature. Foods must be thawed in the refrigerator or under cold, clean, running water.
- If the bamboo mat used to roll the sushi is absorbent (i.e., not waterproof), the mat must be lined with food grade plastic wrap that is changed every 2 hours and after each contact with raw fish.
- If the bamboo mat is non-absorbent (waterproof), the mat must be cleaned and disinfected every 2 hours and after each contact with raw fish.

Resources:

Public Health Ontario's [Control of Parasites by Freezing in Fish for Raw Consumption](#)

For more information, please contact your Public Health Inspector
at Southwestern Public Health.