

Cross Contamination & How to Prevent

Cross contamination can happen at almost any point in the flow of food. When you know how and where it can happen, it is fairly easy to prevent. The most basic way is to keep raw and ready-to-eat food away from each other.

Pathogens can move around easily in your operation. They can spread from food or unwashed hands to prep areas, equipment, utensils, and other food.

Guidelines for Preventing Cross-Contamination:

- Use separate equipment for raw and ready-to-eat food.
 - Example: Colored cutting boards and utensil handles can help keep equipment separate. yellow for poultry, red for raw meat, green for produce, and blue for shellfish/fish.
- Clean and sanitize before and after each task.
 - Clean and sanitize all work surfaces, equipment, and utensils before and after each task.
 - Example: After cutting raw chicken, you cannot get by with just rinsing the equipment. Pathogens such as nontyphoidal Salmonella can contaminate food through cross contamination.
- Prep raw and ready-to-eat food at different times.
 - Example: If you use the same prep table prep ready-to-eat food before raw food, you can reduce the chance for cross-contamination.
- Buying prepared food.
 - Buy food that does not require much prepping or handling. Buying precooked chicken breast or chopped lettuce can reduce the chance for cross-contamination.

Make sure fruit and vegetables do not touch surfaces exposed to raw meat, seafood, or poultry.