

Cut Tomatoes

PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS:

Historically, uncooked fruits and vegetables have been considered non-TCS foods unless they were epidemiologically implicated in foodborne illness outbreaks and are capable of supporting the growth of pathogenic bacteria in the absence of temperature control. Since 1990, at least 12 multi-state food-borne illness outbreaks have been associated with different varieties of tomatoes. From 1998 – 2006, outbreaks associated with tomatoes made up 17% of the produce-related outbreaks reported to FDA. *Salmonella* has been the pathogen of concern most often associated with tomatoes. Regardless of where or how contamination occurs, proper refrigeration in the food establishment will prevent the growth of pathogens that may be present on cut tomatoes.

FOOD CODE, OAR 603-25-0030, CHAPTER 1-201.10 (101) (b)

Recent foodborne illness outbreaks have been associated with different varieties of cut tomatoes contaminated with pathogens, specifically *Salmonella*.

The Oregon Food Code designates cut tomatoes as a Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Food that must be maintained at temperatures of 41°F (5°C) or less or hot held at 135°F (57°C) or above.

The following tomato and tomato products must be maintained under safe temperature controls: sliced, diced, or chopped fresh tomatoes; cut tomatoes used as an ingredient in another food such as salsa, salads, or guacamole; cooked tomatoes and tomatillos; commercially canned/processed cooked tomatoes and tomato products upon opening, unless written documentation from the manufacturer proves that the product is a non-TCS food.

Onsite acidification at retail food establishments to render a food shelf-stable (no temperature requirements) would require prior approval from the Oregon Department of Agriculture and comply with 21 CFR 114.

Additional recommendations:

- Cut tomatoes stored separately from raw, unwashed produce, raw meats, and seafood.
- Fresh cut tomatoes and cooked tomato products must be date marked and used or discarded within 7 days.
- Avoid using damaged or spoiled tomatoes.
- Wash whole tomatoes thoroughly under running water. The use of soap or detergents is not recommended.
- Refrigerate raw tomatoes before slicing so they are already below 41°F (5°C).



**OREGON
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