

A Consumer's Guide to Washing Ready-to- Eat Lettuce/ Leafy Green Salads

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Acknowledgements

- This presentation is based on the document, Recommendations to Consumers Regarding Washing Ready-To-Eat Lettuce/Leafy Green Salads, that was assembled by the Fresh-Cut Produce Re-Wash Panel put together by the California Department of Health Services, Food and Drug Branch.

Questions we will address:

- What does this have to do with me?
- Why is washing so important?
- What kind of salad should I buy?
- Should I wash ready-to-eat lettuce?
- Does washing make my salad safer?
- What are some proper techniques for washing produce?
- What are FightBAC™ procedures?

What do ready-to-eat leafy green salads have to do with me?



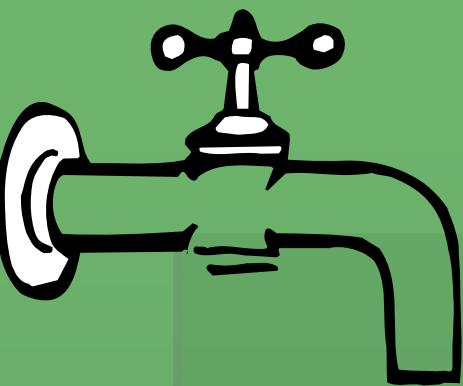
- YOU are buying them!
- 15% of all produce sales are from fresh-cut fruits and vegetables
- Every year the sales of fresh-cut salads add up to 2.7 billion dollars!

Prepackaged Produce and Disease Risk

- Improper handling during the preparation of foods is the leading cause of contamination by food-borne pathogens, both in the home and in restaurants.
- Using precut packaged produce helps to reduce this risk.

What to buy

- What to look for:
 1. Is the date on the product still good?
 2. Is the produce refrigerated?
 3. Is the produce surrounded by ice?
 4. Does the produce look like it's been tampered with?
- If your fresh-cut vegetables do not meet this criteria, then DO NOT buy!
- If you are unsure, ask the produce manager.



Should I wash my lettuce?

You don't have to wash your lettuce if...

- The produce is a **pre-washed** bagged salad.
- The produce is kept refrigerated.
- The produce is used by the “use-by” date.

Look at what the package says

- A ready-to-eat product will typically say one of three things:
 1. “Washed”
 2. “Triple-washed”
 3. “Ready-to-eat”
- If the product says one of these things it usually will not have to be washed, **unless** you are told to do so by the instructions on the package.

What if the lettuce is not labeled?

- If the product is not labeled “ready-to-eat,” make sure you **WASH** it!
- If the package advises you to pre-wash the food item, make sure you **WASH** it!
- If the bag containing ready-to-eat lettuce has already been opened, then you must **WASH** it.



Will rewashing my ready-to-eat salad make it safer?

Extra washing of ready-to-eat salad will rarely make it safer to eat

- It is rare that harmful bacteria will be found on ready-to-eat lettuce.
- If there are harmful bacteria left on the salad after commercial washing, they will be resistant to further washing procedures.
- If proper washing procedures are not followed, there is a risk of **CROSS-CONTAMINATION!**

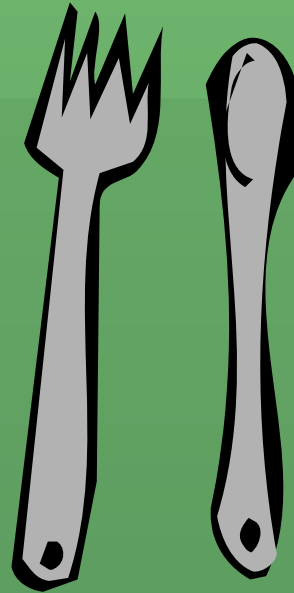
I feel more comfortable
rewashing my salad. How
can I safely wash my
produce?

Rule One

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.

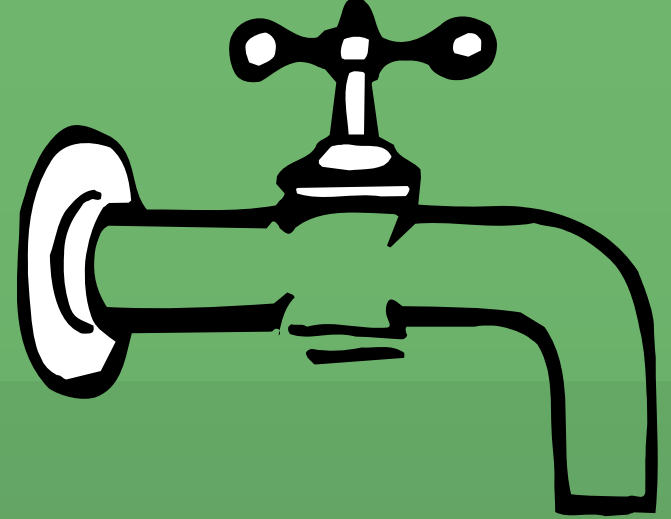


Rule Two



- Clean any utensils (sink, colander, salad spinner, knives) with **hot soapy water** before they come in contact with the salad.

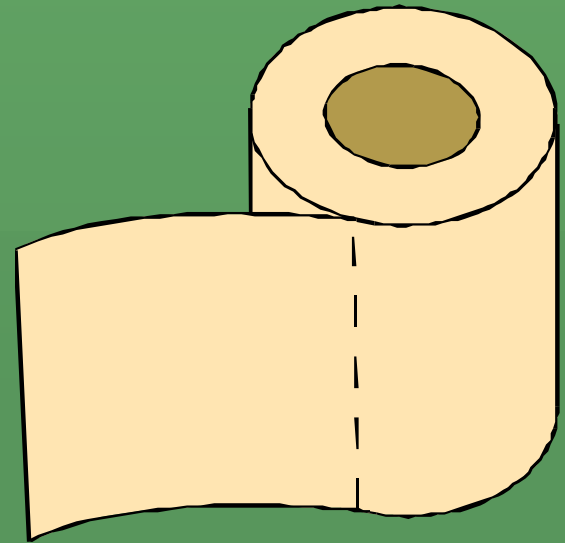
Rule Three



- Use **cold** running water to thoroughly rinse the salad in order to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Rule Four

- Dry the salad with a **fresh** paper towel or salad spinner.



NEVER USE DETERGENTS OR BLEACH TO WASH PRODUCE!

These products are not meant to be consumed.

Use FightBAC™ Procedures

- Since most contamination comes from food preparation at home, you have to be very careful when you are preparing your produce.

“Safe Food Handling: The Four Steps,” 2006. Fight Bac Keep Foods Safe from Bacteria.
<http://www.fightbac.org/content/view/6/11/>



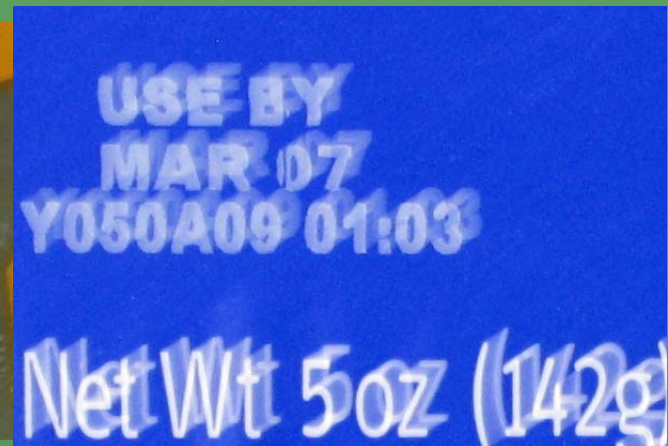
CCSCT

1. **C**heck
2. **C**lean
3. **S**eparate
4. **C**hill
5. **T**hrow Away



Check

- Before you buy, check the expiration date.
- **Also check** that the ready-to-eat produce is not bruised or damaged.
- Also make sure that the ready-to-eat produce you are buying is refrigerated in the store. If it is not refrigerated, **DO NOT BUY!**



Clean



- **Clean** your hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds before food preparation.
- **Clean** all countertops and utensils with hot water and soap **BEFORE** salad preparation.
- Make sure you use a **clean** utensil to serve your freshly prepared salad.

Clean



- In order to sanitize cutting boards, dishes and utensils:
 - Combine one teaspoon of bleach with one quart of water.
 - Pour this mixture onto the surface and let it sit for one minute.
 - Rinse the surface area with **hot** running water.

Simonne, Amy, "Floral, Leafy, and Stem Vegetables: Safe Handling Practices for Consumers." 2002. University of Florida IFAS Extension. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/FY/FY49100.pdf>

Separate

- In your shopping cart at the store, be sure that you **separate** fresh produce from:
 - Household chemicals, such as bleach and other cleaning supplies
 - Raw meat
 - Raw poultry
 - Raw seafood

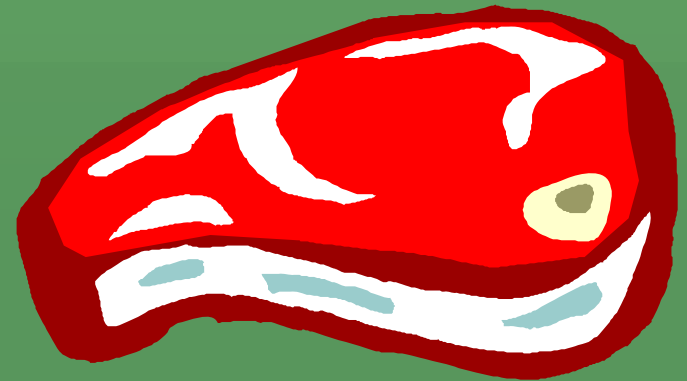


Separate

- In your refrigerator, make sure you **separate** ready-to-eat lettuce and leafy green salads from raw meat, poultry and fish, as well as their juices.
 - Pay special attention to make sure that the juices cannot drip onto the lettuce or green salads.

Separate

- In your kitchen, if it is possible, use separate cutting boards for produce and raw meat products.



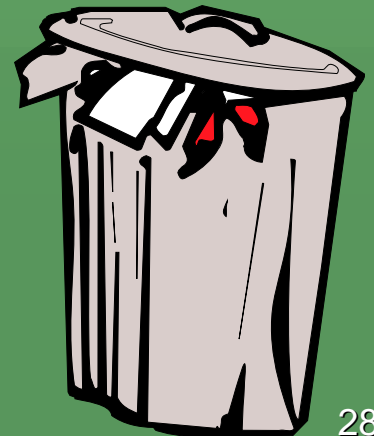
Chill



- Ready-to-eat salads and lettuce should be stored in the refrigerator.
- Refrigeration slows the rate of bacterial growth.
- Refrigerator temperature should be set at 40°F or below.
- Fresh-cut vegetables should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours.

Throw Away

- If your ready-to-eat lettuce or salad has touched raw meat, poultry, or fish.
- If the product looks spoiled.
- If the product is past its use-by date.



Additional Resources

- <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/lettsup.pdf>
- <http://portal.fightbac.org/pfse/toolsyoucanuse/phec>
- <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodsafe.html>
- <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY491>
- <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY484>

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Questions????

