



Food Safety Information

Mechanically Tenderized Beef

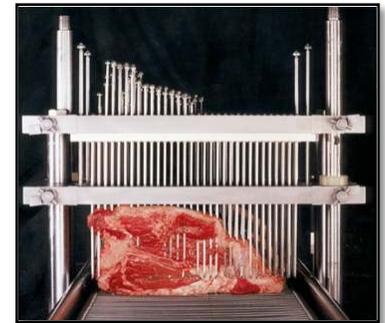
Background

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is charged with ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. FSIS provides educational materials about safe food preparation to ensure that consumers know how to avoid foodborne illness.

Since 2000, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received reports of six outbreaks attributable to mechanically tenderized beef products prepared in restaurants and consumers' homes. Failure to thoroughly cook a mechanically tenderized raw or partially cooked beef product was a significant contributing factor in each of these outbreaks.

What is Mechanically Tenderized Beef?

To increase tenderness some cuts of beef go through a process known as mechanical tenderization. During this process, the steaks are pierced with needles or sharp blades to break up muscle fibers. The tenderization process can take place in the factory before the beef is packaged, at the grocery store's butcher counter, at a restaurant, or in the home. The USDA FSIS estimates that about 2.7 billion pounds of mechanically tenderized beef are labeled for retail each year, accounting for more than 6.2 billion servings of steak or roast.



What is the Risk?

The process of mechanically tenderizing beef does pose some health risks. With this process, any pathogens on the outside of the steak may be transferred to the inside, posing a potential threat if the beef products are not cooked properly. Consumers should understand that mechanically tenderized products look no different from products that are not mechanically tenderized. Therefore, it is important to remember food safety when preparing these products.

What is FSIS Doing?

In May 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service published new labeling requirements for raw or partially cooked beef products that have been mechanically tenderized. When these requirements become effective in May 2016, consumers, restaurants, and other food service facilities will have more information about the products they are buying, as well as useful cooking instructions for preparing them safely.



Cooking Beef Safely

All raw beef steaks should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes after it has been removed from the heat source before carving or consuming. During this rest time, the internal temperature is either constant or slightly rises to destroy pathogens.

For More Information

Using [Clean](#), [Separate](#), [Cook](#), and [Chill](#) every time will help to keep you and your family safe from foodborne illness. If you have any food safety questions, you can call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at **1-888-MPHotline** (1-888-674-6854) or chat live with a food safety specialist at [AskKaren.gov](https://www.askskaren.gov) available from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, in English and Spanish.