

SAFE HANDLING AND COOKING OF ROASTER PIGS

Washington State Department of Health is investigating an outbreak of *Salmonella* illnesses in the state that may be linked to pork. Based on information gathered in the investigation, some of the illnesses are associated with roaster pigs cooked at private events and restaurants.

Anyone butchering and handling roaster pigs and large cuts of pork must take special care to prevent the spread of illness. Proper food handling, preparation, and cooking are the best precautions to prevent illness. Roasting a pig safely is complex with many potential food handling issues. Following these food safety guidelines can help prevent foodborne illness:

Receiving and Holding

Have your supplier wrap your roaster pig in plastic or put it in a plastic bag to contain the juices. After receiving your roaster pig, keep it cold at or below 40°F prior to cooking. Some restaurants have large walk-in coolers to hold the pig. When this is not an option, keep the pig iced in a large cooler at or below 40°F, or pick it up right before you cook it. If you purchased a frozen roaster pig, thaw it completely before cooking.

Avoiding Cross-Contamination

Clean all coolers, sinks, cutting boards, knives, countertops, roasting pan, or other equipment that come into contact with raw meat using these three steps:

1. **Wash**
2. **Rinse**
3. **Sanitize** with a solution of 1 teaspoon of household bleach in 1 gallon of cold water.



Preparing and Cooking

Use a digital cooking thermometer to check the temperature in different parts of the meat, including near the bone. Every part of the roaster pig must be at least 145°F. Allow the roaster pig to rest for at least three minutes before cutting. Some parts, such as the shoulders and hams, take longer to cook because they are thicker than other parts. To make sure every section of meat is greater than 145°F some of the thinner sections will get much hotter. To avoid those parts from being dry and tough, try to keep the air temperature around the meat to 225-250°F.

Serving and Handling Leftovers

Transfer cooked meat to clean serving dishes. Pack leftovers in shallow containers uncovered and refrigerate right away. Throw away leftovers that have been at room temperature for more than 2 hours. It is not necessary to cool the meat before refrigeration.

General Food Safety Practices

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after handling raw meat.
- Store raw animal foods below and away from all other foods.
- Keep different kinds of raw animal meats separate.
- Thoroughly cook animal foods. Use a digital food thermometer inserted into several of the thickest parts of the cooked meat to check temperatures.
- Keep cold food at 40°F or below in a refrigerator or under ice and keep hot food at 135°F or above.
- Do not cook for others if you are sick with vomiting or diarrhea.
- Restaurant or other food establishment workers who are sick with symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea should stay home for at least a full 24 hours after getting better.