

Parasites in Our Salmon and What to Do ... For Real

Sushi, it seems, has become more and more fashionable here in the U.S. When we say sushi grade fish, most people presume it is fresh, raw fish. This is probably one of the best misconceptions in the sushi world. The fish you are eating raw is not fresh and has been previously frozen.

U.S. law states that fish intended to be served raw as sushi or sashimi has to be bought by an approved supplier and has to be previously frozen. The purpose of the freezing process is to kill any parasitic contamination that might be found in the fish. Parasites need a host body, animal including humans



or fish to live and can be destroyed with heat or freezing. Please note that freezing will not kill the other pathogens responsible for foodborne illnesses, i.e. viruses, bacteria, fungi and toxins.

Recent news reported a Japanese broad tapeworm was found in salmon from U.S. Alaskan Pacific waters. This tapeworm has normally been associated with fish found in Japan, South Korea and Russia. This tapeworm can grow to 30 feet long in human bodies. The Center for Disease Control reports that most infected people have no symptoms, but some can suffer from diarrhea, stomach pain, weight loss and

vitamin B-12 deficiency. The CDC reports that treatment of praziquantel and niclosamide are two drugs used for treatment.

In our Food Service Manager certification classes, we teach that sushi — raw fish — can be eaten because it is so fresh and has been previously frozen. My initial reaction to the news story of parasites being found in salmon was, “Why would there still be parasites found in the salmon? It’s been pre-frozen, no?” Then I realized that not all fish is sold pre-frozen because not all fish will be served in its raw state as sushi or sashimi.



Heat, in the form of proper cooking temperatures, kills the parasites as well. The Food and Drug Administration recommends cooking fish to a minimal internal temperature of 145°F for at least a duration of 15 seconds. Herein lays

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