



## FRESH AND FROZEN SEAFOOD: SELECTING AND SERVING IT SAFELY

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for ensuring that the nation's seafood supply — both domestic and imported — is safe, sanitary, wholesome, and honestly labeled.

Fish and shellfish contain high quality protein and other essential nutrients and are an important part of a healthful diet. As with any type of food, however, it is important to handle seafood safely in order to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Follow these basic food safety tips for buying, preparing, and storing fish and shellfish — and your customers can safely enjoy the fine taste and good nutrition of seafood.

### Buy Right: Fresh Fish and Shrimp

Buy only fish that is refrigerated or delivered on a thick bed of fresh ice that is not melting.

- Fish should smell fresh and mild, not fishy, sour, or ammonia-like.
- A fish's eyes should be clear and bulge a little.
- Whole fish and fillets should have firm, shiny flesh and bright red gills free from milky slime.
- The flesh should spring back when pressed.

- Fish fillets should display no discoloration, darkening or drying around the edges.
- Shrimp flesh should be translucent and shiny with little or no odor.

**FISH AND SHELLFISH CONTAIN HIGH QUALITY PROTEIN AND OTHER ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS AND ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF A HEALTHFUL DIET.**

### Selecting Shellfish

Follow these general guidelines for safely selecting shellfish:

1. Look for the label: Look for tags on sacks or containers of live shellfish (in the shell) and labels on containers or packages of shucked shellfish. These tags and labels contain specific information about the product, including the processor's certification number. This means that the shellfish were harvested and processed in accordance with national shellfish safety controls.
2. Discard cracked/broken ones: Throw away clams, oysters, and mussels if their shells are cracked or broken.

3. Do a tap test: Live clams, oysters, and mussels will close up when the shell is tapped. If they don't close when tapped, do not select them.
4. Check for leg movement: Live crabs and lobsters should show some leg movement. They spoil rapidly after death, so only live crabs and lobsters should be selected and prepared.

### Frozen Seafood

Frozen seafood can spoil if the fish thaws during transport and is left at warm temperatures for too long. Check carefully for signs of thawing when receiving product.

### Store Properly

Put seafood on ice or in the refrigerator or freezer soon after receiving it. If seafood will be used within two days after delivery, store it in the refrigerator. Otherwise, wrap it tightly in plastic, foil, or moisture-proof paper and store it in the freezer.

### Separate for Safety

When preparing fresh or thawed seafood, it's important to prevent bacteria from the raw seafood from spreading to ready-to-eat food.

Take these steps to avoid cross-contamination:

- Make sure cooked seafood is physically separated from raw seafood.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling any raw food.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with soap and hot water between the preparation of raw foods, such as seafood, and the preparation of cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- For added protection, kitchen sanitizers can be used on cutting boards and countertops after use. Or use a solution of one tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach to one gallon of water.
- If you use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use.

### Thawing

Thaw frozen seafood gradually by placing it in the refrigerator overnight. If you have to thaw seafood quickly, seal it in a plastic bag and immerse it in cold water.

### Serving

Follow these serving guidelines once your seafood is cooked and ready to be enjoyed.

- Never leave seafood or other perishable food out of the refrigerator for more than two hours or for more than one hour when temperatures are above 90°F. Bacteria that can cause illness grow quickly at warm temperatures (between 40°F and 140°F).
- When it's used for a buffet party, keep hot seafood hot and cold seafood cold:
  - Divide hot party dishes containing seafood into smaller amounts (don't stuff the chafers). Keep platters refrigerated until time to reheat them for serving.
  - Keep cold seafood on ice or serve it throughout the gathering from platters kept in the refrigerator.