

# Safety of Cantaloupe



Cantaloupe and other melons present special food safety risks. Netted melons like cantaloupe grow on the ground and can come in contact with pathogens in non-composted fertilizer or through handling. Unlike other fruits, cantaloupe are not acidic and readily support the growth of pathogens once they are sliced open. Outbreaks of illness linked to melons contaminated with *Salmonella* are an unfortunate occurrence each year.

**UW-Extension recommends that consumers take the following steps to reduce the risk of contracting *Salmonella* or other foodborne illnesses from cantaloupes:**

- Purchase cantaloupes that are not bruised or damaged. If buying fresh-cut cantaloupe, be sure it is refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- After purchase, refrigerate cantaloupes promptly.
- Wash hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling fresh cantaloupes.
- Scrub whole cantaloupes by using a clean produce brush and cool tap water immediately before eating. If you use soap or detergents, be sure to rinse the melon well before slicing.
- Use clean cutting surfaces and utensils when cutting cantaloupes. Wash cutting boards, countertops, dishes, and utensils with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, or seafood and the preparation of cantaloupe.
- If there happens to be a bruised or damaged area on a cantaloupe, cut away those parts before eating it.
- Leftover cut cantaloupe should be discarded if left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Use a cooler with ice or use ice gel packs when transporting or storing cantaloupes outdoors. Sliced or cut melon should never be out of refrigeration for more than 2 hours, 1 hour when it's above 90 °F.

Symptoms of foodborne *Salmonella* infection include nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps. In persons with poor health or weakened immune systems, *Salmonella* can invade the bloodstream and cause life-threatening infections.

**Safe handling of produce is very important. Several fact sheets offer tips on food safety of various fruits and vegetables. See the A-Z food safety index for these publications**  
[www.foodsafety.wisc.edu](http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu)

## C-Cantaloupe

Safe Handling of Fresh Cantaloupe (Spanish)

Cantaloupe: Safe Methods to Store, Preserve and Enjoy

Safe Handling of Fruits and Vegetables

