

A Retail and Food Service Operator's Guide to Washing Ready-to-eat Lettuce and Leafy Green Salads

Prepared by
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Acknowledgements

- This presentation is based on the document, Recommendations to Retail and Food Service Operators Regarding Washing Ready-To-Eat Lettuce/Leafy Green Salads, that was compiled by the Fresh-Cut Produce Re-Wash Panel assembled by the California Department of Health Services, Food and Drug Branch.

Questions we will address:

- How do ready-to-eat lettuce and leafy green salads affect me and my business?
- Should I wash ready-to-eat lettuce?
- What is cross-contamination and why is it important to avoid?
- What are the rules for washing prepackaged salads?
- How do I identify damaged salad products and what do I do when they are shipped to me?

What do ready-to-eat lettuce and leafy green salads have to do with me?

- 15 billion dollars are spent each year on fresh-cut fruits and vegetables.
- 15% of all produce sales come from the sale of fresh-cut fruits and vegetables.
- Fresh-cut salads alone have sales of 2.7 billion dollars a year.



Two main reasons to buy “ready-to-eat” food products

1. They are convenient and ready to eat.
2. They reduce the risk of food contamination because they are prepared in controlled manufacturing environments.

Why is it important to avoid cross-contamination?

- An estimated 76 million cases of food borne disease occur each year in the United States.
- 325,000 hospitalizations are related to food-borne disease.
- 5,000 deaths are related to food-borne disease each year.
- Average cost of a food-borne illness to an establishment is \$75,000.

“Foodborne Illness,” 2006. Division of Bacterial and Mycotic Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.”http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/foodborneinfections_g.htm#howmanycases

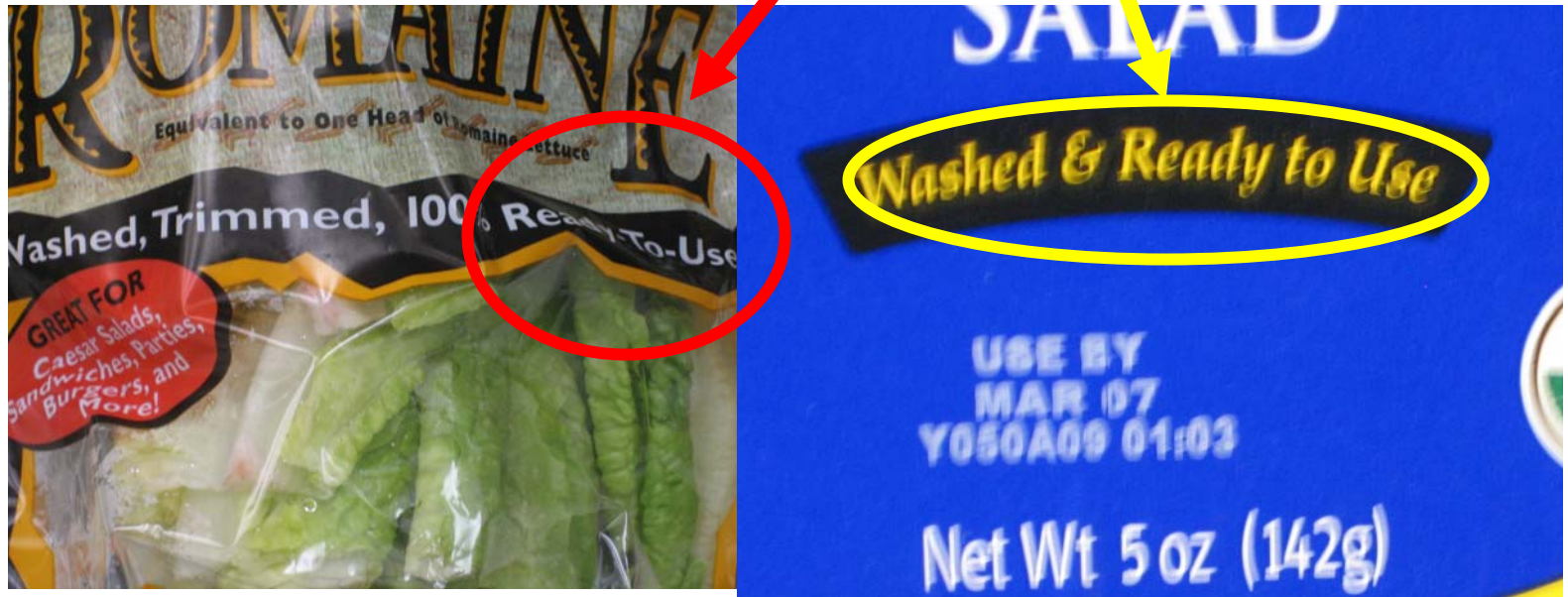
“Industry Related Food Safety FAQs,” 2006. National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation.
http://www.nraef.org/faq/faq_industry.asp

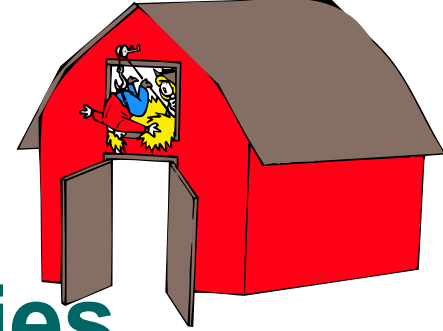


How do I know if my establishment needs to wash ready-to-eat produce?

Check Food Labels!!!

Which Label to look for?





Raw Agricultural Commodities

- Raw agricultural commodity - any food in its raw or natural state, including all fruits that are washed, colored, or otherwise treated in their unpeeled natural form prior to marketing.
 - Example: a head of iceberg lettuce
- If the product is a raw agricultural commodity, then you must wash the product before you prepare it for consumption.

Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act, US Food and Drug Administration. 2006.
<http://www.fda.gov/opacom/laws/fdcact/fdcact1.htm>

Ready-to-Eat Products

- “Ready-to-eat” pre-washed bagged produce can be used without further washing if kept **refrigerated (41°F or lower)** and used by the **use-by date**.
- Look for key terms on the food labels to decide if your produce is a ready-to-eat product.

Key Terms

- You do not have to wash your produce if the food label contains any of these terms:
 - “Washed”
 - “Triple-Washed”
 - “Ready-to-eat”

Rewashing

- It is rare that harmful bacteria will be found on ready-to-eat lettuce.
- If there are harmful bacteria present after commercial washing, the bacteria will be resistant to further washing procedures.
- If proper washing procedures are not followed, there is a risk of **CROSS-CONTAMINATION**.

Our establishment chooses to wash our prepackaged salads

Follow the Five Rules



Rule One:

- Wash hands before handling ready-to-eat lettuce/leafy green salads.
- Rewash hands often.



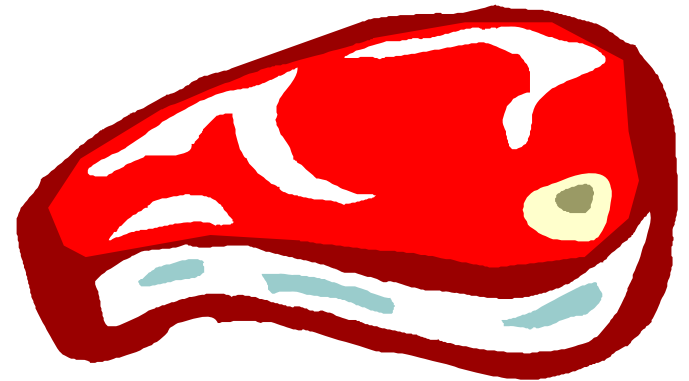
Hand Washing Tips

1. Remove jewelry.
2. Wash hands with soap and warm running water.
3. Clean your arms and hands with soap for 20 seconds.
4. Don't forget the back of your hands and wrists, and use a nailbrush for under your fingernails.
5. Rinse hands and arms with warm running water.
6. Use a disposable paper towel to dry hands.

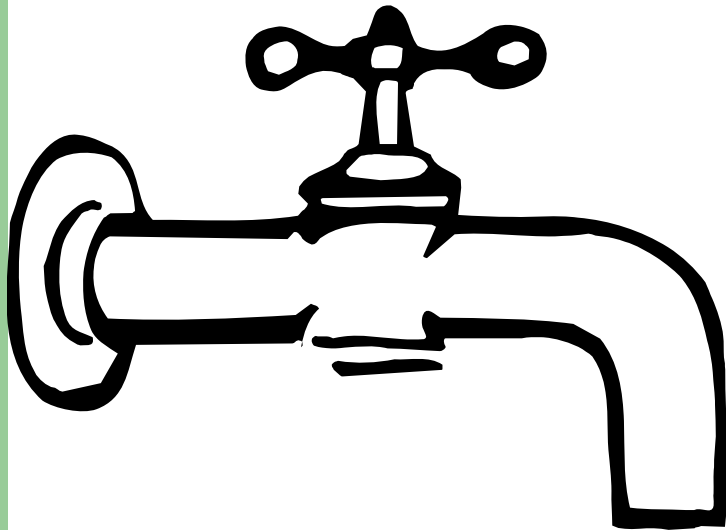
Simonne, Amy, Proper Hand Washing for Food Handlers. 2005 University of Florida IFAS Extension.
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/fy/FY72600.pdf>

Rule Two:

- Use an environment that is separated from other food items that may carry food-borne illness, such as raw meat and raw poultry.



Rule Three:



- Clean and sanitize the sink, colander, and any other utensils that will contact the product.

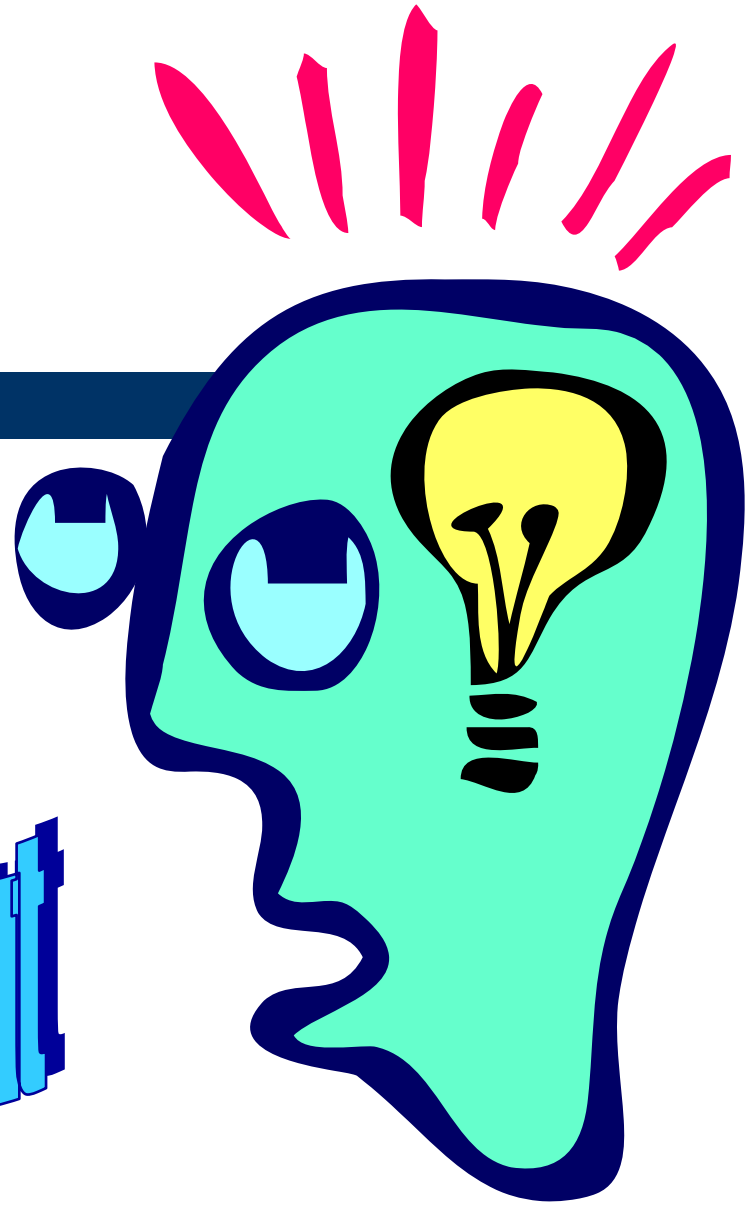
Rule Four:

- The ready-to-eat salad should be washed in cold running water.
- This will reduce the potential for cross-contamination.
- Dry salad with fresh or paper towel or salad spinners.

Rule Five:

- When soaking the product, use an approved and appropriately labeled antimicrobial as per manufacturer's directions.
- Make sure that you monitor the concentrations of solution used for this soaking process.
- **DO NOT** use household bleach to soak produce.

More Things to Think About

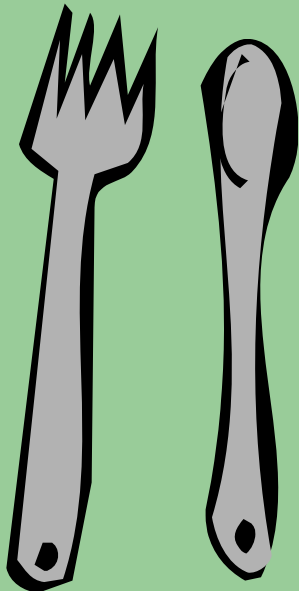
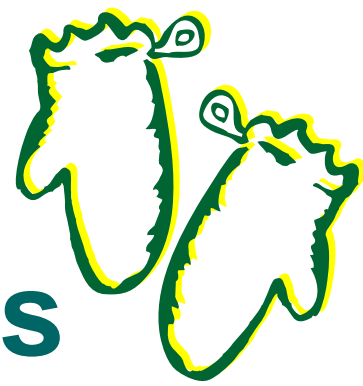


When hand washing just isn't enough

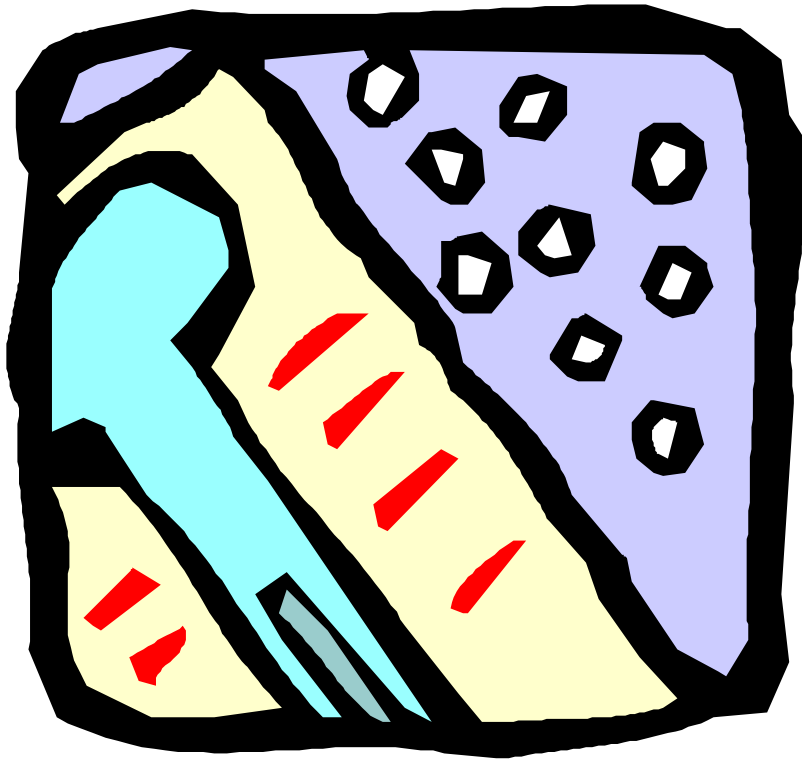
- Try not to handle the salad with your bare hands.
- Use gloves.
- Use utensils.



**Gloves and utensils
are NOT substitutes
for proper hand
washing**

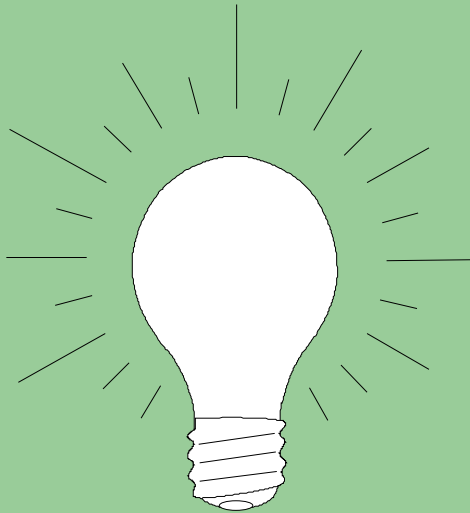


Reminder



- Ready-to-eat lettuce and leafy green salads should be stored in a refrigerator.
- They must also be displayed under refrigeration.

Ready-to-eat lettuce and leafy green salads may be damaged in the shipping process



What do we do???

Investigate

- Make sure you inspect the products when you receive them.
- **Reject** any products that look like they have been tampered with or mishandled.

Signs an item has been tampered with

- Check to see if the boxes or bags that your produce comes in are:
 - Dirty
 - Wet
 - Open
 - Crushed
- Use good judgment.



Example of Dirty Boxes



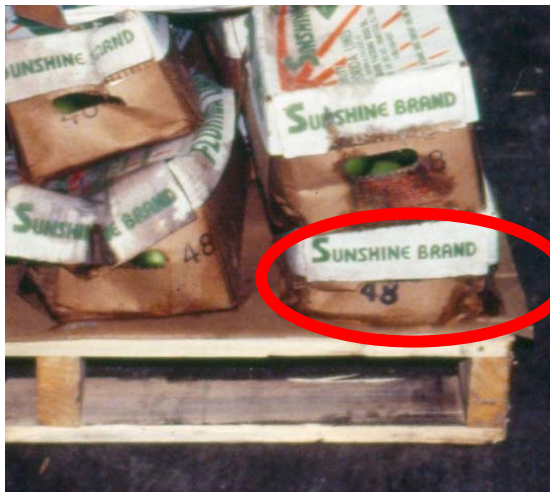
Examples of Wet Boxes



Examples of Open Bags

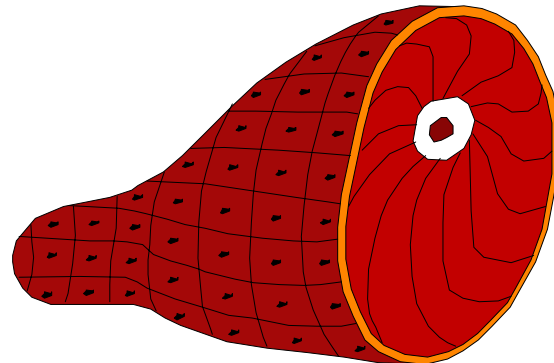


Examples of Crushed Boxes

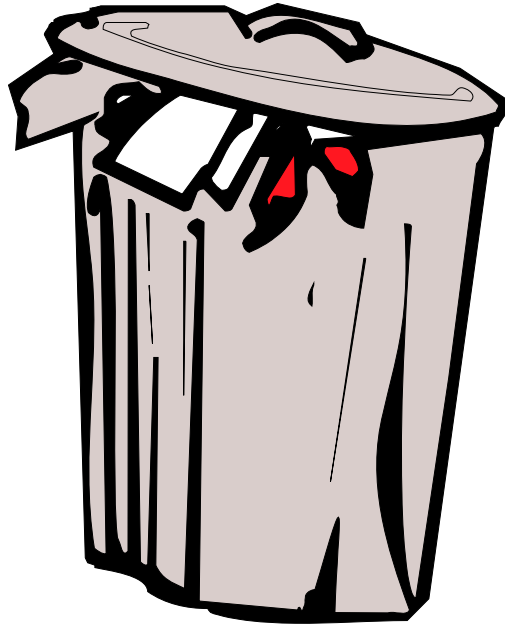


Storage Concerns

- Pay attention to how you store the ready-to-eat salad in order to prevent cross-contamination
- Do not store raw meats on shelves above ready-to-eat salads
 - Juices may spill on the salad and contaminate it.



Spoiled Salad



- If the produce **APPEARS** to be spoiled and/or has an **EXPIRED** use-by date, **DISCARD IT!**

Additional Resources

- <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/lettsup.pdf>
- <http://portal.fightbac.org/pfse/toolsyoucanuse/phec>
- <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/prodsafe.html>

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Questions

