



Peppers were prime cause of 2008 *Salmonella* outbreak linked to over 1,500 illnesses

FOOD SAFETY INFOSHEET
MARCH 28, 2011

Temperature abuse a factor in 2008 *Salmonella* outbreak

Pepper and tomato-containing dishes sitting at room temperature may have made the outbreak larger.

After investigation into the 2008 *Salmonella* outbreak that sickened over 1500 people throughout North America, the U.S. CDC determined that Serrano peppers were the primary source of the illnesses. *Salmonella* matching the outbreak strain was found in water samples taken from the farm where the peppers were grown. Investigators believe that tomato-based dishes such as salsa, which

also contained peppers, held above 41 °F for more than 4 hours increased the risk of people becoming ill. Diced, sliced or pureed tomatoes can provide a great environment for bacteria such as *Salmonella* to multiply. It is a common, but risky, practice to hold salsa and guacamole at room temperatures for more than 4 hours.



- What you can do:
- Refrigerate tomato dishes below 41 °F.
 - Avoid cross-contamination from potentially contaminated foods to tomato dishes that will be served at room temperature.
 - Ask suppliers to follow good agricultural practices.

PROPER STORAGE OF TOMATO-BASED PRODUCTS CAN REDUCE RISKS



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