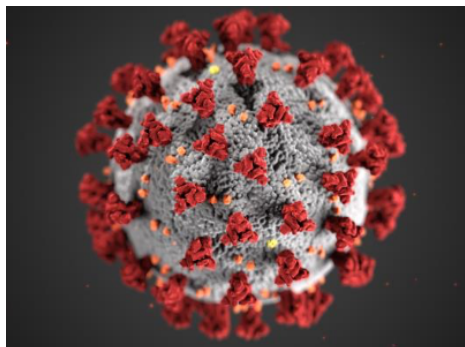


Is it Safe to Eat Restaurant Foods During Coronavirus Concerns?

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03/26/2020



According to the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and International World Health Organization (WHO), there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 through food. Take-out or delivery foods from restaurants are safe provided the restaurant strictly follows the US FDA model Food Code.

Covid 19 - Coronavirus

The Covid 19 strain of Coronavirus causes flu-like symptoms. Some persons, especially elderly, can progress to pneumonia. The WHO has classified this virus as a pandemic, with more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 deaths (as of March 11, 2020).

As a result of the international spread of this virus, many are isolating themselves and restricting outside activities. One activity that is hard to curtail is procuring food. Many are questioning the safety of food and are concerned about its role in the transmission of the virus.

Is it safe to eat restaurant food?

Currently, there is no evidence that the coronavirus spreads via foods. Instead, it is spread person-to-person. This includes spread via an infected person's bodily fluids that are present in aerosols (coughs or sneezes) and on surfaces.

Therefore, the concern is not the restaurant food, but a dining space with other patrons. In response to this risk, many restaurants have closed their in-house dining and have transitioned to all take-out or delivery.

Is take out or delivery safe from Coronavirus?

Take-out or delivered foods are safe from the Coronavirus providing the restaurant adheres to the strict requirements of the US FDA model Food Code. Isolating those with the illness, good hygiene and sanitation are most effective in limiting exposure to the virus. This includes all viruses and bacteria. Restaurants are required under the US FDA model Food Code to prevent ill workers from coming into contact with food or the facility. They are also required to clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces daily and have done so long before the Coronavirus concerns.

How to choose a restaurant for take-out or delivery?

Look for restaurants that understand the nature of the Coronavirus and provide information on how they adhere to the US FDA model Food Code. At a minimum look for the following:

1. An "A" or 85% food sanitation score on their latest health inspection.
2. A notice to consumers that they (a) monitor employees for the illness and exclude any with symptoms, (b) maintain good hygiene by using sanitary gloves or utensils when preparing foods and washing hands, and (c) clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces at high frequency.

Should I reheat delivery or takeout foods before eating?

Food prepared in a sanitary restaurant with healthy staff should not be exposed to the virus. However, as an additional precaution, reheating foods that are normally consumed hot to 165°F is safer.

Should I avoid fruits and vegetables in delivery or take out foods?

As mentioned earlier, foods are not considered a means of transmission of the Coronavirus. Both the USDA and

FDA have cited that imported and domestic foods are NOT considered risks for the virus.

Peer-reviewed by Dr. Karin Allen, Dr. Charles Carpenter, and Ms. Holly King (Health Educator).

Should I use a delivery service or trust a delivery driver?

Check with the restaurant to ensure that they seal all of your foods for delivery in packaging that cannot be opened by a delivery driver. Restaurants can place tamper-evident seals on packages or simply staple the packaging shut multiple times. Keep in mind that a food operator has little control over the health status of third-party delivery drivers.

Are there any concerns after I receive delivered foods?

It is always safest to assume the outside of packaging has been exposed to the environment and possibly viruses. Remove food from outer packaging (e.g. a bag or box that individual foods were carried in), wash hands, transfer food to plate, bowl, etc. using clean utensils, wash hands again, then enjoy your food.

Should high-risk persons (e.g. elderly) consume take-out or delivered restaurant foods?

The safest practice would be to consume only foods cooked to 165°F at home. This is advised whether the food is from a restaurant or grocery store. The risk of eating other foods is based on the trust in those that have handled the foods. As a reminder, food handlers are more concern than the food itself.

Trusted Resources:

US CDC<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

US FDA<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

USDA<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>

Photo Source: US CDC (Public Health Image Library).

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