

SOCIABLE, ENJOYABLE, DANGEROUS



Winter is fondue and raclette season. However, this cosy feast can end in an unpleasant foodborne infection. What should you look out for?

Little pieces of meat and vegetables from the raclette pan or fondue fork are a popular way to warm up on the inside when it is cold outside. However, pathogens that may be present on raw meat may be transferred to food during the preparation and cooking of the ingredients, which are then eaten without further heating. For example, if ingredients are on the same plate or come into contact with the same cutlery.

Campylobacter bacteria are particularly common on raw poultry. *Campylobacter* infection is the most frequently reported bacterial foodborne disease in Germany and the European Union. A total of 43,166 cases were reported in Germany in 2022. Young children and young adults are particularly susceptible to infection. Even small quantities of germs suffice. This results in diarrhoea with fever and stomach cramps, which usually go away on their own after a few days. However, in individual cases severe nerve disorders or joint inflammation are also possible.

On the one hand, infections with *Campylobacter* germs occur more frequently in the summer months. Transmission by insects leads to more frequent colonisation of the

germ in animal populations. As a result, *Campylobacter* are increasingly found on raw poultry. On the other hand, there is also an annual short-term surge in the number of cases at the beginning of the year. In a study, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) was able to show a connection between *Campylobacter* enteritis cases after Christmas and New Year's Eve and meat fondue or raclette meals during the holidays, particularly when chicken was on the menu.

GOOD KITCHEN HYGIENE IS ESSENTIAL

Good hygiene when handling raw animal foods is essential in avoiding infections with *Campylobacter*. This applies to preparation in the kitchen as well as at the dining table itself, when family and friends gather around the raclette dish or fondue pot. It is important that there is no spread of germs, i.e., cross-contamination. This is the term

SEPARATE AND CLEAN – TO AVOID A BAD ENDING.

usually used to describe the transfer of germs from raw food to other food. This can happen if they come into direct contact with each other. However, indirect transmission via hands, work surfaces, cutlery or other kitchen utensils is also possible. For example, bacteria can pass from uncooked meat to cooked pieces, potatoes or vegetable pieces if the fork or plate is not changed. Raw meat, especially poultry, and food that is consumed without further heating should therefore be strictly separated. Good kitchen hygiene also includes thoroughly cleaning hands, kitchen utensils and preparation surfaces after contact with raw food of animal origin and before preparing other foods or elements of a meal.

HEAT-SENSITIVE MASTERS OF CAMOUFLAGE

Since *Campylobacter* germs do not cause food spoilage, it is not possible to detect their presence by appearance or smell. However, like most foodborne pathogens, *Campylobacter* can be killed by heating: a temperature of 70 °C must be reached in the centre of the food for at least two minutes.

Regardless of this, “separate and clean” is way to go for fondue and raclette ingredients, cutlery and more. This ensures avoiding a bad ending. —

More information



BfR-FAQ
„Protection against foodborne
infections in private households”
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