

A Guide to *Safe Chicken Barbecues*

Raw eggs may contain *Salmonella enteritidis*, a harmful bacterium, known to cause serious illness, especially in children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. As a result, state health departments, the US Department of Agriculture, and the US Food and Drug Administration have advised people to not use or consume raw eggs in foods that will not be cooked.

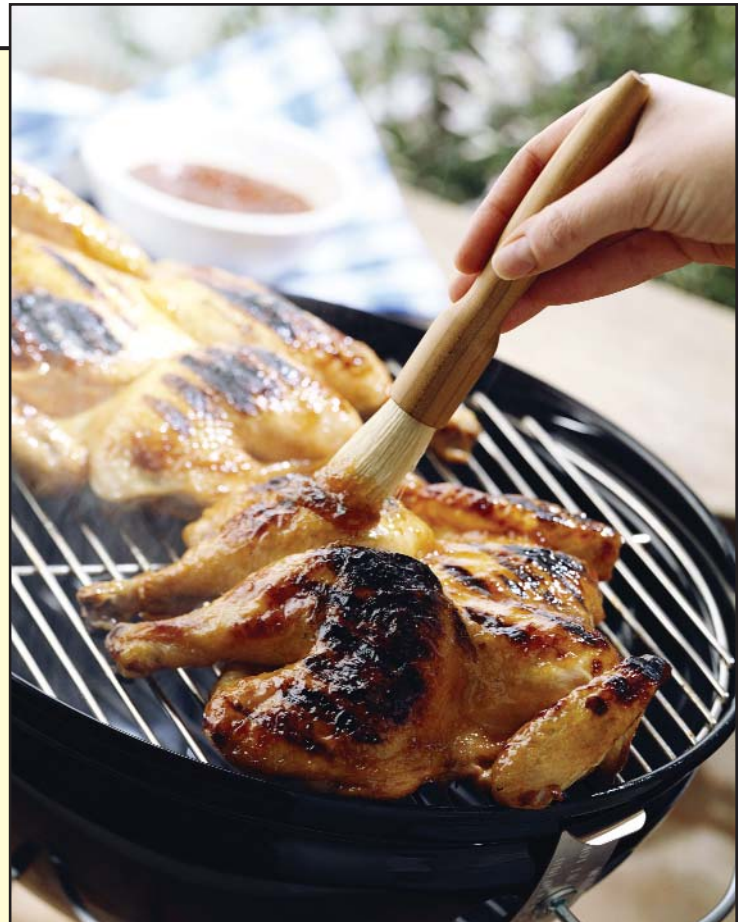
Does that mean you can no longer use the ever-popular Cornell Chicken Barbecue Sauce? The recipe calls for a raw egg. Could the sauce be a possible source of *Salmonella enteritidis*?

Poultry and Food Science specialists at Cornell University and officials at the Bureau of Community Sanitation and Food Protection of the New York State Department of Health all agree that the Cornell sauce is safe when used with other recommended food preparation practices because:

- It contains 2 cups of vinegar for each egg used. This means that it is high in acid which would kill any bacteria that might be present.
- The sauce is cooked after it is applied to the broiler halves. And chicken is (should be) cooked to the well-done stage. Done on a hot grill, the exterior temperature of the pieces would reach 400°F, more than enough heat to kill any *Salmonella* present on the raw poultry or in the egg.

What may not be safe, however, are some outdoor food preparation and serving practices. Raw chicken and other meat can harbor *Salmonella*, as well as other harmful bacteria. At warm temperatures, between 40°F and 140°F, these microorganisms can multiply and cause illness. But if you take a few simple precautions during preparation and cook chicken thoroughly to kill bacteria, you don't have to worry about food borne illness.

Remember to take what you know about kitchen cleanliness and safe food handling out to the grill:



- If you prepare the barbecue sauce ahead of time, refrigerate it. Take to the grill only the amount of sauce you will use to baste the chicken at that time.
- Regardless of what is said above, if you are preparing large quantities of sauce for a community organization's barbecue, you can use pasteurized eggs* for an extra margin of safety. Pasteurization kills any harmful bacteria that might be in the eggs.
- Clean your hands just before working with food. If hot water and soap are not available nearby, use disposable, wet hand wipes.
- Keep bacteria on raw poultry or meat from spreading to other raw or cooked food, including cooked chicken or meat. Wash your hands again after working with raw poultry or meat and before handling other kinds of food.

- Save time: Buy broilers already split in half. Take them from the package and place them right on the grill. If you do cut up the chicken yourself, immediately wash your cutting board and the knife thoroughly with soap and hot water before using them to prepare other foods for your cookout.
- Do not partially cook chicken in the kitchen ahead of time unless you are going to put it on the grill immediately. Dangerous bacteria can sometimes grow when food is partially cooked, held for a time, then later re-cooked.
- Keep the chicken on the grill for several minutes after the last baste to be sure the sauce is well cooked. Poultry cooked on the grill often browns very fast on the outside. Test the doneness of the chicken using a thermometer: It should reach 170°F in the breast and 180°F in the thigh. If you are cooking large numbers of chicken halves, check the temperature of representative pieces in different locations on the grill.
- Transfer the chicken to a clean plate, tray, or container using clean utensils. Do not use the plate used to carry the raw chicken to the grill or the utensils used to turn raw chicken.
- Discard the portion of sauce that was used to baste the chicken; dipping the basting brush into the sauce after brushing the raw chicken may dilute the acid (vinegar) in the sauce and contaminate it with harmful bacteria.

- Refrigerate leftover barbecued chicken, unused barbecue sauce, and other foods as soon as possible after the meal. Use a cooler with ice or freezer packs if you are away from home. Keep the cooler in the shade. Refrigerate or properly cool leftovers within two hours after serving (1 hour if temperatures are above 90°F) or throw out.

Make a habit of following these few simple rules and you, your family and mends, and your community can enjoy safe and tasty chicken barbecues all season long!

Pasteurized liquid eggs can be obtained from food service product distributors (check telephone yellow pages) or may be available in small packages in some supermarkets. Some supermarkets may stock pasteurized in-shell eggs.



Classic Cornell Barbecue Sauce

(This is a basting sauce. Brush it on the chicken every few minutes during cooking.)

Yield: enough for 10 halves

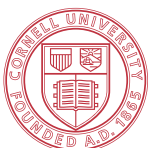
1 cup cooking oil	1 tablespoon poultry seasoning
2 cups cider vinegar	½ teaspoon pepper
3 Tablespoons salt*	1 egg

Beat the egg, then add the oil and beat again. Add other ingredients and stir. This recipe can be varied to suit individual tastes.

*Adjust the quantity or eliminate salt to meet individual health needs and taste. Chicken basted frequently will be saltier than chicken that has been lightly basted.

Healthy Heart Version:

Reduce oil to ¼ cup and add ½ cup water. Reduce or omit salt.



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For answers to food safety or food preparation questions contact Cornell Cooperative Extension's Consumer HelpLine by phone 631-727-7850, ext. 374, or by email jl9@cornell.edu.

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