

Lasagna Love specific food safety recommendations based on the FDA Food Safety rules & ServSafe Certifications

PLEASE READ ALL THE WAY TO THE END

A quick note on why food safety is so important -

Folks with weaker immune systems (young children, pregnant women, people with certain health conditions or who are sick, and people over about 50 years old) are more susceptible to foodborne illnesses / food poisoning. In turn, getting a cold, or food poisoning weakens a person's immune system. These days it is extra important to prevent any kind of illness, which makes food safety that much more important to keep in mind while preparing, cooking & transporting food.

Principle #1: If you don't feel well, take the day off.

No food handling while having a fever or onset of any kind of cold (symptoms often begin with aches, lethargy, poor appetite). And, if you know you have been exposed to COVID, even if you have a negative COVID, please do not cook for 14 days following your exposure.

Principle #2: Wash everything

1. Wash your hands before handling any food and after touching any raw meat or allergens. It's always a good practice to wash your hands before handling any food.
 - With soap
 - For 20 seconds
 - Past the wrist or up to the elbow
 - Under hot water
 - Then dry your hands on a clean towel
2. Make sure to wash your hands after touching any raw meat before you touch anything else! Also, please don't apply lotion after washing your hands until you are completely done handling any food.
3. Wash your vegetables. Whatever vegetables you will be adding into the lasagna, be sure to rinse / wash those before using.
4. Make sure your counter space, cutting boards, utensils, etc. are all washed, clean and ready to go.

Principle #3: Avoid cross contamination

One of the easiest ways to avoid getting someone sick is being mindful of cross contamination during food prep and storage.

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Some examples of cross contamination include:

- Getting your raw meat on your ready to eat veggies
- Getting any trace of peanuts on anything that isn't supposed to have peanuts, for example.

To avoid cross contamination, just make sure you are following these rules:

- Use a different cutting board, knife, utensils, etc. for raw meats than for veggies

OR

- Wash your cutting board, knife, utensils, etc. after you use it for raw meats, raw eggs, or any foods associated with common allergies.
- Clean as you go - use hot, soapy water and paper towels or clean cloths to wipe up kitchen surfaces or spills.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables in running tap water to remove visible dirt and grime

Cross contamination with non-food things is also important to keep in mind. This means,

- Keep your hair up if you have long hair
- Make sure your clothes and any dish towels you are using are clean so you're not touching something that was used for something else or has gotten dirty and then touching the food
- Watch out for physical contaminants like metal shavings from a can, pieces of plastic or cardboard from opened bags and containers, etc. Small pieces of packaging or items on your counters can easily get mixed into the food if you're not careful.
- If you touch your face or yourself or someone else, wash your hands before going back to your food

Principle #4: Be mindful of allergens

The most common allergies are pretty well known:

- Fish
- Shellfish
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Milk
- Eggs

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- Gluten
- Soybean

People have allergies to all sorts of things, from garlic to cinnamon to apples. We can't avoid everything for everyone which is why we have a statement on our sign up site that states if you have a severe or life threatening allergy to please consider not signing up. However, some people don't develop allergies later in life, so I feel it's worth reminding everyone to wash your hands and any surfaces that have recently made contact with peanuts, fish, shellfish, anything else that is not expected to be in the lasagna.

Principle #5: Cooling & Storing

Leaving food out too long at room temperature can cause bacteria (such as Staphylococcus aureus, Salmonella Enteritidis, Escherichia coli O157:H7, and Campylobacter) to grow to dangerous levels that can cause illness.

Side note: Speaking of bacteria growth, botulism can grow in cans, please do not donate dented or bloated cans.

For storing your lasagna ingredients:

- Always refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F).
- Make sure your refrigerator is at or below 40 °F and if you are freezing items, that your freezer is 0 °F or below.
- Be sure to cook any ground meats or poultry within 2 days of purchase.
- If you have canned goods and the cans are bulging, this is likely caused by the botulism bacteria - throw this out, don't risk paralyzing someone.
- Do not store items directly in the can once it has been opened, transfer the food to a different container and cover.

For ingredients as you use them and for your lasagna once it's baked:

- Do not leave food in the temperature danger zone (40 °F - 140 °F) for more than 2 hours. This means if you've just cooked your lasagna and it's still hot, it needs to be cooled relatively quickly. This does not mean put it in the fridge immediately. The hot food can raise the temperature inside the refrigerator/freezer which can be a risk for food already in the appliance. Instead, let your lasagna cool on the counter to 140 °F, then place the tray in an ice bath (fill a larger tray with ice and a little cold water) to cool it quickly.

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- Covering hot food will trap the steam causing condensation which encourages bacterial growth. If you need to cover your lasagna while it's still hot or warm, poke holes into the wrap / foil or leave the lid askew.
- Similarly, if you are assembling a lasagna that will not be baked (or not baked within 2 hours), remember that the hot noodles will be raising the temperature of the pre-baked lasagna & will need to be cooled quickly.
- Lastly, do not use or accept any food that has been in the temperature danger zone for more than a couple of hours.

For cooking:

To prevent foodborne illness, we know that certain foods need to be heated to specific internal temperatures.

Minimum internal temperatures:

- Casseroles - 165°F
- Ground beef or pork - 160°F
- Poultry (ground or not) - 165°F
- Eggs - 160°F

All lasagnas must be cooked to 165°F

Ok, great, so how do we really know that the internal temperature of a lasagna is 165°F? Use a thermometer, make sure the notch on the stem is well into the contents of the lasagna, leave the thermometer in the lasagna for 8 seconds after the needle stops moving to get the correct temperature.

Note: If you're not sure if your thermometer is calibrated, get a glass of ice water (which will always be 32°F) and use it to test the temperature. If the thermometer reads anything other than 32°F, use the sleeve or a wrench or some pliers to turn the hex nut under the face of the thermometer until the needle points to 32°F.

For delivering:

Now that you have this glorious lasagna to deliver, the last step is to keep it safe until it has been handed off. This means that:

- The lasagna should not be in the temperature danger zone for longer than 2 hours
- If the lasagna needs to travel further than 2h, keep it cold - that means cool it and keep it on ice during transportation. (you can get a casserole cooler on amazon that fits a tray perfectly!)

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- Ensure you include the delivery note located on the first tab of your Sheets (includes ingredients, warm/ reheat directions.)

By participating in Lasagna Love, I agree that I have read and understand the food safety principles above and will adhere to them to the best of my ability.