

Transcript Season 2 Episode 4 : Can I Eat the Pizza I Left Out Overnight?

In today's busy world, take-out and delivered foods are increasing in popularity. Some foods are served hot, and some are served cold when purchased.

We play a part in safety of what we eat. Different pathogens can be risky in different way and that safety step that's effective against one might not be as effective against another.

Podcast Opener:

Everyone needs some advice now and then. If you are getting ready to leave home or have been on your own for a while, Grown Up U: Facts for Success can give you trusted advice that can take the stress out of adulthood. Listen and find some answers to the questions being constantly bombarded at you.

Podcast Script:

Jessica Angel:

Do you ever find yourself having questions about if something is still safe to eat?

Hello, I am Jessica Angel the Cleburne County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.

Along with beautiful, warm, sunny weather we've all been waiting for comes a habit that many people fall prey to and that's eating food left out overnight. Which is a BIG food safety no-no.

It is a habit that poses a dangerous health risk and in today's podcast I am going to cover steps you can take in properly handling your foods, proper safety cooking techniques, and storage tips that are essential in preventing foodborne illness.

I know many of us have been in this scenario before. But picture this, you are having some friends over for a little get together and what is easy and leaves you with little mess to clean up. That's right, Pizza.

After everyone leaves, you are tired, so you forget all about the left-over pizza still sitting on the kitchen counter. So, you head straight to bed. The next morning, you're starting your day and nothing sounds better than that pizza.

The problem?

After many hours left sitting out, that room-temperature pizza has had lots of time to grow potentially harmful bacteria

It can also now potentially make you violently ill with symptoms like diarrhea, vomiting or worse.

It could land you in the hospital with a full-blown foodborne illness that shuts down your organs and causes negative, long term health consequences or even death.

Now you may be thinking,

My mom always left food out overnight, and I never got sick or lots of people leave food out overnight all the time and they don't get sick.

All of this is dangerous.

When it comes to eating food, you've left out overnight for more than 2 hours there's no way around it...

That food is simply not safe for you to eat.

When it comes to hot carry out food like pizza, make sure that the two-hour countdown starts when the food begins to drop to below a temperature of 140 degrees F

which is typically the car ride to your house.

So unless your food is piping hot when it gets to you, you have less than two hours before you need to get the food into the fridge.

After food has been left out past the two hour mark, you can't just re-heat it and think that makes it safe to eat.

Bacteria that can survive the heat has now already multiplied.

A good example is *Staphylococcus aureus* which is everywhere.

Did you know that Staph lives in our bodies, our food and the air we breathe?

The Center for Disease Control estimated that there are over 240,000 cases of staph each year in the United States.

Staph is a common cause of food borne illnesses.

People can contract the illness by eating food that is usually not been kept hot or cold enough.

Staph can reproduce at a temperature of 50 to 120 degrees F.

So, when we don't store our perishable foods properly like Pizza. We give the opportunity for staph bacteria to grow rapidly and produce heat-stable toxins that cannot be destroyed by reheating.

This is why it is so important to put your left over foods in the refrigerator.

Let's talk about some symptoms of Staph.

Symptoms usually occurs within a few hours of eating the contaminated food. Most common symptoms are nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramping. In more severe cases, headache, muscle cramping, and you may even see a change in your blood pressure or pulse rate.

Recovery takes about 2-3 days for most cases. Make sure you hydrate which will replace those fluids you lost along with salt and minerals.

There are many harmful bacteria and pathogens that can be in our food.

So what can you do to prevent?

The answer is to follow some simple steps that together lower the risk from most food borne illnesses

Remember if you plan to go to a movie or be out and about after eating at a restaurant, then you should skip taking leftovers. Those leftovers are going to be sitting in your car while you are in the movie and bacteria has probably already grown rapidly.

If you reheat all your leftovers but don't finish the entire portion, refrigerate what's left immediately so it can be safely reheated again.

When you are reheating in the microwave, place your food on a microwave safe plate.

Make sure your food items are spread evenly and stirred halfway through heating to avoid cold spots

Never reheat in a slow cooker because those foods may be sitting too long in the Temperature Danger Zone which is 40-140F.

You are probably wondering what is the Danger Zone? Well, this is something very important you should know. The danger zone is the temperature range of **40–140°F (4–60°C)**, in which bacteria grow and thrive.

Keeping perishable foods out of the danger zone is critical to keeping your food safe.

Remember the motto: Keep your hot foods hot and your cold foods cold.

When you are reheating those leftovers, use a food thermometer to check the food's internal temperature. Usually, 165 degrees F is the appropriate temperature for re-heating leftovers.

Let's talk about now when you are cooking at home what you can do to make sure you keep you and your family and friends safe:

One of the most important things when I am teaching a food safety class is wash your hands!

Our hands can get very dirty when we cook. So, ensure you wash your hands before and after handling food with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.

But also wash your hands when handling different foods too.

Another tip at home is Make sure you wash all raw fruits and vegetables under running water. These nutritious foods are safe, as you probably know from the many times you have eaten them but wash them just in case, they have somehow become contaminated.

For the most part, the less of a pathogen on a food if any the less change that it can make you sick.

Another example that I believe it so important is keeping any pathogen that could be on raw, unwashed food from spreading by keeping raw and cooked foods separated.

You can keep these items in containers and make sure you don't use the same equipment on them, unless that equipment is washed properly in between.

For example: I am making Chicken Parmesan. I have just cut up my raw chicken on my cutting board. Next, I need to cut up my broccoli florets, so I place them on the same cutting board I used to cut up my raw chicken. I cook my meal and serve it to my family.

After several hours we develop symptoms of a food-borne illness. In food safety, I made the mistake of what we call cross contamination.

Cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards, and utensils if they are not handled properly.

You see, I should have switched out my cutting board for a clean one when I was chopping my broccoli florets. One simple task caused my family and I to be sick and who knows c, it could have put us in the hospital.

You see food safety can be prevented if we take simple steps like washing our hands, cooking to the correct internal temperatures and storing our foods properly in the refrigerator. Just

because it may look fine and smell fine doesn't mean it is safe to eat. Always remember When in Doubt throw it out

I hope you enjoyed today's Grown Up U podcast on Food Safety.

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