

# Five things you need to know to make sure your favorite home-delivery meal kits are safe

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[New research from a Rutgers University](#) professor that looked into the safety of home delivery meals found almost half of the meal kits' ingredients were unsafe to eat.

Researchers tested 169 meal kits and found 47 percent of the 684 items arrived with surface temperatures above 40 degrees, making them unsafe to eat. The study also found the shipping companies delivering the meal kits wash their hands of any responsibility if they show up spoiled. Rutgers professors also found products from home delivery meal kits are most likely left outside for more than eight hours before being refrigerated.

If you want the convenience of home meal delivery services, but want to do it safely, here are the five things you need to know:

- 1. Use a calibrated thermometer:** check the temperature of the food in your meal kit with a calibrated thermometer as soon as it arrives at your door. "FDA has a zone they call the temperature danger zone which is 41 to 135 - if food is in that zone for more than four hours you have to discard," explained Eric Lane, who teaches food safety at the University of Denver Fritz Knoebel School of Hospitality.
- 2. Four-hour rule for foods off temp:** Lane said foods kept off temperature for more than four hours should go in the trash, because that's when pathogens that can make you ill can start growing on the food.
- 3. Check temperatures while cooking:** Lane also suggests using a calibrated thermometer throughout the cooking process to ensure meats and fish reach the proper temperatures before you eat them.
  - Chicken: 165 degrees for 15 seconds
  - Ground meat: 155 degrees for 15 seconds

- Seafood: 145 degrees for 15 seconds

4. **Be aware of cross contamination:** With several different kinds of ingredients in each box, Lane said to check and make sure that nothing has leaked, especially raw meats before you begin cooking. "No matter how well you pack these things, you run some degree of risk," he said.

5. **There are no FDA guidelines for home meal delivery kits:** The FDA is currently studying the issue, but has not caught up with the trend. Right now, Lane said meal kit companies aren't held to the same standards as brick and mortar restaurants when it comes to food safety requirements.

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