

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

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*“Tips to Prevent Foodborne Illness from Raw Flour”*

11 states recently reported salmonella contamination in raw flour and a food safety recall has been issued, reminding consumers that any raw product can contain foodborne illness bacteria. As such, an outbreak can result from consuming contaminated raw dough or batter. As many of you know, flour comes from a plant, whether it is wheat, soy, oats, rice, or other plants. Therefore, it is exposed to environmental sources of naturally occurring microorganisms. It remains a raw product because there is no treatment during flour milling to change it to a ready-to-eat food.

Flour is a minimally processed food that requires heat treatment to make it safe to consume. That happens when it is used in cooking and baking. Despite what is found on the internet, there is no validated method to heat treat flour at home. Commercially heat-treated flour is available, primarily to the food industry.

The best ways to prevent illness from raw flour include:

- Follow cooking and baking directions to safely cook or bake foods.
- Keep raw flour away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Clean equipment and surfaces after handling raw flour.
- Always wash your hands after handling raw flour.
- Do not eat or play with raw dough.
- Do not use raw cookie dough in ice cream.
- Do not keep raw flour that has been recalled.

To go along with this topic we want to remind those planning to exhibit food items at the 2023 Greenwood County Fair that any food with custard and dairy-based fillings and frostings (ex. Cream cheese) raw eggs, flavored oils, “canned” bread or cakes in a jar, cut fresh fruit or any food requiring refrigeration (ex. Bacon) or unbaked exhibit with raw flour (ex. No bake cookies) will be disqualified and not judged at the fair. This is for food safety reasons and we want to ensure the safety of all our judges when tasting products. For any further clarification on the rules please reference the Greenwood County Fair Paper and the Kansas State Fair 4-H and FFA Exhibitor Handbook. Also, feel free to reach out to the Extension office with any questions or concerns.

Information comes from K-State food scientist, Karen Blakeslee.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.