

Eating insects safely

If food becomes contaminated with bacteria and other germs, people who eat it may become ill. Traces of chemicals such as pesticides can also make people unwell. It is therefore important to take precautions at every stage of the food production process to reduce the risk of contamination.

Harvest

- Capture healthy insects in a place where there is no risk of contamination. For example, away from industrial sites and farms where chemicals may be used to control pests and weeds.
- Avoid over-harvesting any particular type of insect by monitoring insect levels over time. If numbers begin to drop, work with your community to identify the best way to solve the problem. This may include planting trees or other vegetation to attract greater numbers of the insect. You may also wish to establish a local rule that no insects can be harvested for a certain period each year. This will allow the insects to reproduce and increase in number.
- Kill the insects quickly by freezing or drowning, and do not use chemicals.



Store and transport

- Rinse the insects in clean, salty water.
- Dry the insects and store them either cooled or frozen in clean packaging.
- Keep a record of when the insects were harvested and label and date the packaging. This helps to make sure that the older insects are eaten or sold first.
- If they are being transported, keep the insects cool or frozen.



Cook

- Cook fresh insects as soon as possible after harvest to avoid the risk of them spoiling.
- Use good hygiene practices and do not prepare the insects if you are unwell.
- Clean the insects and remove wings, legs and other parts that are not edible.
- Using fresh oil, fry or heat the insects to a high temperature to kill any bacteria or parasites.
- After cooking either eat immediately or cool and cover to reduce the risk of contamination.
- Keep a record of when the insects were cooked and label and date any packaging.

Sell

If selling cooked insects online:

- minimise the length of time between cooking and delivery, keeping the product cool and covered
- use clean and hygienic packaging.

If selling on a market stall or in a shop:

- ensure that all surfaces are clean and that the product is protected from birds, flies and other insects
- keep the product as cool as possible by providing shade
- ensure that the area around the stall/shop is clean and free from waste
- wash your hands regularly and consider wearing a face covering
- do not sell the product if you are unwell.

Hygiene precautions

Fresh, well-cooked and covered food will be free from germs and safe to eat. However, precautions need to be taken to make sure the food does not become contaminated.

- Always wash your hands before touching food.
- Make sure that plates and utensils are clean and protected from flies.
- Use safe drinking water to cook with.
- In hot weather food can spoil quickly. Either eat it straight after cooking or keep it cool and covered.
- Keep all pests and animals away from food, including flies, mice, rats, cockroaches, chickens, dogs and cats. Flies often carry faeces and germs on their feet so just one fly crawling over food can spread diarrhoea to the people eating it.

