

Homemade Eggnog – Make it Safely

Homemade eggnog is a tradition in many families during the holiday season. But each year this creamy drink causes cases of *Salmonella*. The ingredient responsible? Usually raw or undercooked eggs.



Eggs are a standard ingredient in most homemade eggnog recipes, giving the beverage its characteristic frothy texture. To prevent this ingredient from causing harmful infections, just follow these guidelines for safe handling.

Cooking the Egg Base

The FDA advises consumers to start with a cooked egg base for eggnog. This is especially important if you are serving people at high risk for foodborne infections: young children and pregnant women (non-alcoholic eggnog), older adults, and those with weakened immune systems.

To make a cooked egg base:

1. Combine eggs and half the milk as indicated in the recipe. (Other ingredients, such as sugar may be added at this step.)
2. Cook the mixture gently to an internal temperature of 160 °F, stirring constantly. The cooking will destroy *Salmonella*, if present. At this temperature, the mixture will firmly coat a metal spoon (but please don't lick the spoon if the custard is not fully cooked!). Do not let the mixture go beyond 160 °F as above that temperature, the eggs are likely to curdle. (If curdling occurs, put the mixture in a blend and blend until smooth.)
3. After cooking, chill the mixture before adding the rest of the milk and other ingredients.

Don't Count on Alcohol to Kill Bacteria

Some people think that adding rum, whiskey, or other alcohol to the recipe will make the eggnog safe. But, if contaminated unpasteurized eggs are used in eggnog, you can't count on the alcohol in the drink to kill all of the bacteria – that's not likely to happen

Homemade Eggnog Ingredients

- 1 quart 2-percent milk
- 6 eggs • 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup whipping cream, whipped
- Ground nutmeg

Directions

1. Heat half the milk in a large saucepan until hot. (Do not boil or scald). While milk is heating, beat together eggs and salt in a large bowl, gradually adding the sugar. Gradually add the hot milk mixture to the egg mixture while stirring continually.
2. Transfer the mixture back to the large saucepan and cook on medium-low heat. Stir constantly with a whisk until the mixture thickens and will coat a spoon.
3. Check with a food thermometer to ensure the temperature reaches 160 F. Stir in the remaining milk and vanilla.
4. Cool quickly by setting pan in a bowl of ice or cold water and stirring for about 10 minutes.
5. Cover and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, several hours or overnight.
6. Pour into a bowl or pitcher. Fold in whipped cream. Dust with ground nutmeg and enjoy!

Other Options for Safe Eggnog

You can also use egg substitute products or pasteurized eggs in your eggnog, or you can find a recipe without eggs.

- With the **egg substitute products**, you might have to experiment a bit with the recipe to figure out the right amount to add for the best flavor.
- **Pasteurized eggs** can also be used in place of raw eggs. Commercial pasteurization of eggs is a heat process at low temperatures that destroys *Salmonella* that might be present, without having a noticeable effect on flavor or nutritional content. These are available at some supermarkets for a slightly higher cost per dozen. Even if

you're using pasteurized eggs for your eggnog, both the FDA and the USDA recommend starting with a cooked egg base for optimal safety.

So, by following these safe handling and proper cooking practices, you can enjoy delicious, creamy homemade eggnog without worrying about making anyone sick!

By Nancy Bufano, Food Technologist, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA (Dec 21, 2010).
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