

CROSS-CONTAMINATION FACTOR IN OUTBREAK

88 *Salmonella* Paratyphi B illnesses linked to unpasteurized tempeh



TEMPEH IS A FERMENTED SOY PRODUCT

CROSS-CONTAMINATION

To make tempeh, soybeans are cooked and mashed. Vinegar and a fungal starter are added to the soybean paste and the fungus is allowed to grow for 2-3 days (and it consumes the vinegar). *Salmonella* and other pathogens can grow during this process. Unpasteurized tempeh should be handled like raw meat.



Food safety know-how

- Wash hands after handling any potentially contaminated food or packaging (especially those that are leaking).
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces after preparing any raw or potentially contaminated food.

An outbreak of *Salmonella* Paratyphi B has led to over 80 illnesses in North Carolina since March 2012. The illnesses are linked to restaurants that served tempeh, a fermented soy product. Investigators have since linked the introduction of the *Salmonella* to a starter culture used by the tempeh processor, Smiling Hara of Asheville, North Carolina.

The outbreak has resulted in recalls by Smiling Hara as well as the starter culture supplier, IndonesianFoodMart.com. While the original source of the *Salmonella*

was the starter culture, health authorities pointed to cross-contamination in kitchens as a factor that led to illnesses. Food preparers reported cutting uncooked tempeh and fresh vegetables with the same knives and cutting boards. *Salmonella*-containing tempeh residue could have spread to diners through these utensils.

Unless noted on packaging, treat tempeh as a raw food; knives, cutting boards and other food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized between preparation and use with ready-to-eat foods.

