

# SAFE HANDLING OF GYROS

## Gyros – Preparation and Handling

A gyro is a blend of raw, minced meats (often lamb and beef) mixed with various spices and seasonings and formed into a cone or loaf.

Gyro meat is cooked in a vertical broiler and sliced while the interior and under layers of the cone are still raw. It is difficult if not impossible to control the depth of slice ultimately remove only properly cooked meat that has not been cross contaminated by raw juices or the slicing utensil.

For this reason, you must secondarily cook (by grilling, frying, etc.) all sliced gyro meat to make certain that the meat has reached the minimum cook temperature of 155°F for 15 seconds unless there is a specific consumer advisory for this product.

## Health Risks

This type of meat product poses a higher risk of foodborne illness than many other meat products because the meat is comminuted (ground) and the cooking method used is often based more on visual cues of doneness (color of meat and juices), rather than on specific time and temperature measurements. Comminuted meat has been ground, minced and/or tenderized so surface germs have been mixed throughout the entire food, instead of remaining mainly on the surface.

If not handled properly, the types of germs that can grow in these cones can produce poisons. You cannot destroy these poisons by normal cooking processes or by freezing. These poisons are undetectable by sight, smell or taste.

## Requirements

- Cooking must be continuous – the heat cannot be turned on and off and the rotisserie may not be stopped except when slicing meat from the cone.
- If you do not cook the meat continuously, you must have a written plan for Time as a Public Health Control in place and you must slice and serve the cone—or discard it—within 4 hours.
- Cook sliced gyro meat to a minimum temperature of 155°F for 15 seconds unless there is a specific consumer advisory for this product.
- To avoid leftovers, estimate the size of cone needed for complete consumption by the close of business.
- You may cool completely thawed, leftover cones in the freezer if 4 inches or less in depth.
- If the thawed leftover cone is more than 4 inches in depth, you must slice it, secondarily cook it and then cool it. You may cool the remaining 4-inch depth cone intact in the freezer.
- You may return any portion of a leftover cone still frozen solid to the freezer.
- Cool sliced gyro meat in an approved method (e.g., uncovered, shallow pans no more than 2" to 4" deep). You must cool all heated potentially hazardous foods from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours and from 135°F to 41°F within a total of 6 hours.
- When slicing from the cone, you may handle gyro meat with bare hands because it is not yet ready-to-eat (unless there is a specific consumer advisory for this product). Once the sliced gyro meat has undergone a secondary cook step, it is ready-to-eat and may not be handled with bare hands.
- You may handle ready-to-eat foods with bare hands if you have an approved written Alternative Operating Procedure and apply hand sanitizer after washing your hands properly.



Figure 1 – Gyro cone on spit in vertical broiler.