

SAFE HANDLING OF GYROS AND SHAWARMAS

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

Shawarmas: thin pieces or slices of raw marinated meat (lamb, chicken, beef and goat).

Preparation and Handling

As gyro/shawarma 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 the slice – and ultimately the removal of only properly cooked meat that has not been cross contaminated by raw juices or the slicing utensil.

For this reason, all sliced gyro/shawarma meat must receive a secondary cook (by grilling, frying, etc.) to make certain that the meat has reached the minimum cook temperatures listed under the “Requirements” section (see below). If the minimum cooking temperatures are not reached, the establishment must have a written consumer advisory for the product to inform customers that the meat is raw or undercooked.

Health Risks

The risk of foodborne illness is higher than for other meat products because 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. Research has shown that both *Clostridium perfringens* and *Staphylococcus aureus* can grow in larger cones during the cooling process.

The types of germs that can grow in these cones, if not handled properly, can produce toxins (poisons). These toxins cannot be destroyed by normal cooking processes or freezing nor can they be detected 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 cooking is not continuous, a written plan for Time as a Public Health Control must be in place and the entire cone must be sliced and served or discarded within 4 hours.
- Cook sliced intact meats to a minimum temperature of 145°F for 15 seconds, comminuted and mechanically tenderized or injected meats to a minimum temperature of 155°F for 17 seconds, poultry to a minimum temperature of 165°F (unless there is a specific consumer advisory in place).
- Leftover cones cannot be cooled intact and re-used because the raw animal food has been subjected to more than sixty (60) minutes of cooking. Any cone left must be sliced, fully cooked and properly cooled. Best practice would be to estimate the size of cone needed so it will be consumed by the end of business and avoid having leftovers.
- Sliced meat must be cooled in an approved method (e.g., uncovered, shallow pans no more than 2” to 4” deep) to allow for proper cooling. All heated time/temperature control for safety foods must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours and from 135°F to 41°F within a total of 6 hours.
- Meat being sliced from the cone may be handled 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 – unless there is an approved Alternative Operating Procedure (AOP).
- Ready-to-eat foods may be handled with bare hands if you have an approved written AOP.



Figure 1 – Gyro cone on spit in vertical broiler.



Figure 2 – Shawarma on spit in vertical broiler.