Cruise Smart: 10 Foods to Skip on Board

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Sailing Smoothly

Cruises offer some of the best quality food you can get on a vacation, from endless buffets to specialty dining and so much more. However, certain foods should always be avoided on cruises that can lead to discomfort, food poisoning or other health issues. Here are ten food items you should always think twice about eating while on a cruise to ensure your well-being and health.

10 Foods to Avoid on a Cruise

1. Raw or Undercooked Seafood

Seafood is often a highlight of cruise dining, but consuming it raw or undercooked can pose significant health risks. Shellfish, in particular, can carry harmful bacteria and viruses. Stick to fully cooked options to reduce the risk of food poisoning.

2. Sushi

On the subject of raw fish, sushi can but it can present risks on cruises. Consuming it from questionable sources can be dangerous due to the potential for bacteria in raw fish. Consider sticking to sushi from reputable dining venues that adhere to strict food safety standards.

3. Street Food at Ports of Call

Trying new foods is part of the adventure of cruising, but local cuisines from street vendors can present a gamble. Hygiene standards vary widely, and the food might not be prepared under the safest conditions. In addition, unfamiliar ingredients or exotic dishes may not sit well with everyone. We recommend expressing caution when venturing out and trying foods that you are unfamiliar with in new locations.

4. Leafy Greens and Pre-Cut Fruits

While leafy greens and pre-cut fruits are healthy choices for your on-board dining, they can be contaminated with bacteria if not handled properly. Unless you’re certain of the cleanliness and handling practices, it’s safer to consume whole fruits you peel yourself and cooked vegetables.

5. Tap Water

Even on luxury cruises, the tap water might not always be safe to drink, especially when the ship is docked. Do your best to stick to bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth to avoid potential contaminants.

6. Ice

Furthermore, ice can be a hidden source of contamination, too. On board, make sure your ice is made from purified water. At ports, it’s best to avoid ice altogether. Be sure to specifically ask for your drink to be served without ice.

7. Exotic Fruits and Vegetables

Unique foods from ports of call are often tempting food options while vacationing. However, exotic fruits and vegetables can sometimes cause digestive issues if your body isn’t accustomed to them. Introduce these foods slowly and in moderation to see how your body reacts and to reduce the risk of serious gastrointestinal reactions.

8. Unpasteurized Dairy Products

Unpasteurized dairy products can be a source of harmful bacteria. Pasteurized foods have been exposed to high temperatures to destroy harmful microbes and are always safe to eat. Before consuming any dairy products, make sure that all dairy products you have on board are pasteurized to avoid sickness.

9. Leftovers

It’s tempting to save leftovers from room service–especially when what you’ve eaten is delicious–but these can quickly become a breeding ground for bacteria if not stored correctly. The USDA recommends disposing of all perishable foods that have been left at room temperature for more than two hours, or one hour if the temperature is over 90° F. Don’t stress about tossing out food that you’re not sure is still fresh or not.

10. Buffet Items Left Out Too Long

Buffet dining offers quick and easy dining options for sailors. However, there is really no way to gauge just how long the food on the buffet has been sitting out for or if it’s been touched and riffled through by other people. Foods that are left out for extended periods can have bacteria, leading to foodborne illnesses. We recommend hitting the buffet at the start of the day, when everything has been freshly presented.

Don't let a migraine ruin your trip. Learn how you can prevent migraines while traveling.