Ordering Raw Meats Online

Have you been receiving fliers in the mail, on your door, or sent to your email about ordering raw food products and baskets online? Recent research by the U. S. Department of Agriculture shows that there are some serious health risks associated with ordering raw food products online. If you are one to purchase raw food items/packages online, you might want to do yourself and those around you a favor and reconsider.

Data show that that one in ten Americans purchased or received perishable foods as a result of an online purchase this past year. Online sales are growing. There are more than 500 vendors in the U.S. that sell raw meats online. These online stores allow consumers to purchases foods without leaving their home. Popular products include items such as Kosher and Halal foods, along with game/exotic meats.

A key finding in the research is that consumers’ overall concern was about package delivery temperature. Many companies did not require a signature upon delivery, meaning these food items could be sitting outside, resulting in possible temperature abuse. Also noted on many websites were inaccurate food safety messages, including improper thawing guidelines. Researchers ordered numerous products from the various vendors and recorded surface temperatures upon arrival. Temperatures ranged from -23°F to 75°F. Almost half of the products ordered arrived in the danger zone (above 40°F) and would be considered unsafe for consumption. Another interesting finding was that only 37% of the packages displayed any food safety information on the outside of the box, and only a quarter contained food safety information on the inside.

What does that mean for those of you who wish to purchase raw foods online? When shipping raw products, packers should include some way to keep food cold and protected. Only order raw foods from vendors who require a signature for delivery, which will help prevent foods from sitting out at unsafe temperatures. Lastly, use a food thermometer when receiving food products to ensure the product is at proper temperature (below 40°F). Immediately place items in the freezer or refrigerator. If you are ever in doubt about a product’s safety, contact the company directly to discuss your concerns.

For more information about food safety, contact your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service county office at [insert contact information here].
