

Daily Union Article

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Title: Outdoor Food Safety (Part 3 Of 3)

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream! Who doesn't love a cold scoop of homemade ice-cream on one of our hot summer days in Kansas? As the wife of a former dairyman, I can tell you that the frequent consumption of homemade ice-cream was definitely a perk to becoming an Andres family member!

However, the love of homemade ice cream combined with a food safety conscious wife did create a bit of irritation early on in our marriage. Why? Well, my husband's family had an ancestral recipe for ice cream that used raw unpasteurized milk straight from the bulk tank and eggs right out of the hen house.

Now, I know what you're thinking. "I grew up with unpasteurized milk and farm eggs and didn't die or get sick, so there's nothing wrong with it." Eggs are a standard ingredient in homemade ice cream. Milk is the main ingredient for homemade ice cream. In combination, these ingredients add flavor, prevent ice crystallization, and make the ice cream's texture smooth and creamy. However, raw eggs and milk, as I explained in last week's article can be the source of a food borne illness – salmonella.

For that reason, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advises consumers to start with a cooked egg base for ice cream and use only pasteurized milk. This is especially important if you are serving high risk groups such as pregnant women, children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems. These groups of people are more susceptible to the effects of foodborne illness.

Using pasteurized milk is simple – buy your milk from the store or from a dairy that has the pasteurization process incorporated into their production. The other ingredient of concern is not as easy to address. Even using eggs from the market or grocery store can put you at risk to exposure to salmonella if you use them in the raw form. The eggs need to be cooked to ensure their safe use in homemade ice cream.

Making a cooked egg base is synonymous with making a custard base. Here are the basic steps for preparing a custard base:

1. Combine eggs and milk as indicated in the recipe. (Other ingredients, such as sugar, may be added at this step.)
2. Cook the mixture gently to an internal temperature of 160 degrees F, stirring constantly. The cooking will destroy Salmonella, if present. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of the mixture. At this temperature, the mixture will firmly coat a metal spoon (but please don't lick the spoon if the custard is not fully cooked!).
3. After cooking, chill the mixture before adding other ingredients and freezing.

Another option would be to use an egg substitute product or pasteurized eggs in your ice cream. This will address the food safety concern without significantly compromising the taste, texture, and body of the ice cream. That being said, you might have to tweak your recipe to

make sure you get the right amount to add for the best flavor. Pasteurized eggs can be substituted in recipes that call for uncooked eggs at a one-to-one ratio. The process of pasteurization involves a heating process at low temperatures that destroys any *Salmonella* that might be in the eggs without significantly impacting the flavor or nutritional content. Although these products may cost more at the store, they are a good alternative.

So what is the secret to the ancestral homemade ice cream recipe? Sorry – I am pretty sure that the vows I took on my wedding day – especially the “til death do you part” - covers the homemade ice cream recipe, too. But I will give you a couple teasers...

When I make homemade ice cream using an egg substitute, I use more eggs substitute than what the container says is the equivalent to what my recipe calls for. I am also partial to Mexican or Haitian vanilla that I have had given to me from some of my missionary friends. These “imported” flavors add a very unique taste that is appreciated by those who I get to share it with.

Sharing time, food, and fun with friends and family is one of the best parts of summer. Take care in how you treat this opportunity with your food preparation and serving choice. Have a safe summer full of the best life has to offer – and enjoy some homemade ice cream along the way! Until next time, keep living resourcefully!