



The BOC quick guide to:

Eliminating parasites in raw or lightly cooked fishery products

What's the problem?

Parasites such as Anisakis can be found in different species of fish. If Anisakis larvae are eaten alive by humans they can cause abdominal pain, diarrhoea, vomiting, allergic reactions and even anaphylaxis in rare circumstances.

Thorough cooking will kill parasites but a different safeguard is required for fish eaten raw such as sushi or sashimi. This also applies to cold smoked fish where a core temperature of 60°C is not reached for at least one minute during the smoking process, or any fish that has been marinated, salted or otherwise treated in a way that fails to eliminate the parasites.

So, what's the alternative?

Freezing. All fishery products to be eaten raw or only lightly cooked must be frozen first to eliminate the parasite risk. Keeping the fish at -20°C for over 24 hours, or -35°C for over 15 hours will kill any parasites present, as long as all parts of the fish reach these temperatures. So the fresh, raw sushi you just had for lunch has been previously frozen!

Are there any exemptions from this rule?

Yes, if you can prove that:

- Fish products are heat treated before consumption at 60°C, for at least a minute, to kill parasites other than trematodes (flukes)
- Products have been kept commercially frozen at -18°C for at least four days while being transported and/or stored
- Fishing grounds for wild catches do not present a health hazard from parasites. Currently there are no such exemptions in the UK
- Rigorous production methods have reduced the risk of parasitic infection in farmed fish to extremely low/negligible levels. Currently three exemptions have been granted in the UK for farmed Atlantic salmon, Atlantic halibut and rainbow trout.

So who's responsible for carrying out the freezing treatment?

Whoever is placing these products on the market is legally responsible, so it could be a fish supplier or a restaurant. Buyers of such fishery products should specify the need for appropriate freezing treatment to the supplier, or carry out the treatment themselves to required standards. Whoever applies the treatment must ensure clear documentation is attached to the treated products, in a way that can be tracked and audited.

For more details on this guidance which applies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, see the Food Standards Agency report 'Freezing requirements for fishery products intended to be eaten raw or lightly cooked.'

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/fish-shellfish/freezing-requirements-guidance>



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