

# Chicken Tartare: Eat At Your Own Peril



By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — September 8, 2017



If you've ever taken a cooking class or, better yet, just cooked chicken *once* in your life, you would know that it should *never* be undercooked. When it comes to cooking chicken, one should always abide by this motto:

*If it flies, it dies.*

When I first heard of the raw chicken trend back in July, I [targeted](#) <sup>[1]</sup> the paleo dieters who are urging others to jump on the bandwagon. I thought maybe the fad would sizzle as quickly as it became one, but I was wrong. A simple internet search reveals hundreds of results that offer chicken tartare recipes, and many cook-at-your-own-risk anecdotes. What's worse, restaurants in the U.S. (and Japan) are offering samplings of chicken sashimi, sushi, and chicken tartare — with a little side of nausea, vomit and possible diarrhea. *Yum!* This includes [Ippuku](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, a restaurant in Berkeley, California.

So what's the big deal about chicken tartare? After all, people have been eating steak tartare for years. Let me clarify: As I've said in the past, steak tartare in the hands of a proper chef and proper cuts of meat can be a wonderful thing. But beef tartare from the pre-packaged meat you bought at the store and are attempting to make it at home can bring some not-so-pleasant aftermaths. So when it comes to chicken, one need not look much further than the United States Department of Agriculture [guidelines](#) <sup>[3]</sup> on safe handling raw chicken — it's not a nonchalant process. In fact, handling any raw meat requires good hygiene and a clean sweep of your kitchen after processing. I'm not going to jog your memory on how much salmonella poisoning can suck; if you'd like, you can read [this recent piece](#) <sup>[4]</sup> we wrote warning you not to spoon with your backyard chickens — which has been the culprit for salmonella outbreaks on the rise.

But eating raw chicken doesn't just expose you to the potential of salmonella. The meat also carries a number of bacteria — *Escherichia coli*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Enterococcus*, *Staphylococcus aureus*

, and *Listeria monocytogenes* — which can cause nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, and fever just a day or so after ingestion. For someone with a normal immune system, this can be a few days of misery, possibly hospitalization. For those with a compromised immune system (like pregnant women), it can mean more than just general discomfort. In fact, listeria is one of the bacteria that, unlike salmonella, *can* break through the placental barrier and cause harm to the fetus. It's the same reason mothers-to-be are told to avoid sushi and deli meats.

Advocates for eating raw chicken, like those on the Paleo diet, say it improves digestion, because 'raw meat is easier to digest than cooked meat.' The scientific evidence actually suggests otherwise. Cooking meat properly actually makes it more digestible and more calories can be extracted from it. What the advocates get wrong about eating fresh, raw meat, is that the meat you buy at the store isn't fresh. It has been cut and processed long after the animal has been butchered. So when we cook meat, we kill the number of bacteria that can make you ill.

It's not just science, it's common sense.

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**Links**

[1] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/26/paleo-dieters-you-need-quit-it-raw-chicken-11589>

[2] <http://www.ippukuberkeley.com/>

[3] <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/foodborne-illness-and-disease/salmonella-questions-and-answers/>

[4] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/07/27/backyard-chickens-are-fun-until-vomiting-and-diarrhea-begin-11623>