

Lethal Jambalaya



By Lila Abassi — October 20, 2017



Jambalaya [1]

[Jambalaya](#) [2], a southern Louisiana derivative of the Spanish paella, is said to have derived its name from the French “jambon” meaning ham and the “aya,” the African term for rice. Having roots in church gatherings and a staple of outdoor cooking for large events, it would not be surprising that a bad batch could affect many.

Such was the case in [Columbia, Louisiana](#) [3] where Jambalaya served at a fundraiser has been held responsible for gastrointestinal illness in many and the death of one person thus far. Testing from the state of Louisiana Department of Health has revealed *Salmonella* as the causative agent for this recent outbreak.

The mayor of Columbia, Richard Meredith was quoted, “ It’s bizarre,” he stated. “I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s affected a lot of people, maybe a couple of hundred from my best estimations. I think they are trying to narrow it down - the when what, where and why - I’m not sure to what conclusion.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Foodborne Outbreak Database (FOOD) is a surveillance database which tracks outbreaks of foodborne illnesses around the country.

According to this surveillance tool, *Salmonella* has been responsible for roughly 70,000 illnesses between 1998-2016 and almost 100 deaths for the same time period. It is tough to gauge the actual magnitude of illnesses attributable to this infectious agent as many cases go unreported.

Infections typically occur when there is exposure to the feces of a person or animal carrying the bacteria. Most often *Salmonella* contaminates meat, poultry and eggs, however, fruits and vegetables can also become contaminated. Undercooked meats, contaminated water, raw or undercooked eggs are common vehicles of infection.

Persons exposed to *Salmonella* can expect symptoms of fever, abdominal cramps, and diarrhea, or none at all. Symptoms can appear six to 72 hours after exposure and can last upward one week.

Typical symptoms can include:

- Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Fever 100 F to 102 F

Additional symptoms:

- Bloody diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Headache
- Body aches

Salmonella infections can be scary and hopefully, with the holidays approaching, this is a reminder to be more mindful of ensuring the appropriate handling of food and maintaining proper hygiene with diligent hand washing.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/10/20/lethal-jambalaya-11996>

Links

[1] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/Homemade_Jambalaya.JPG

[2] <http://kitchenproject.com/history/Jambalaya.htm>

[3] <http://www.thenewsstar.com/story/news/local/2017/10/18/possible-mass-food-poisoning-outbreak-caldwell-probed/778040001/>