

## **Cut Tomatoes are a Potentially Hazardous Food**

A “potentially hazardous food” is a food that requires temperature control because it is in a form that can encourage the growth of bacteria. Because many people across the country have become sick from cut tomatoes, it is now being considered a potentially hazardous food.\*

### **Temperature Requirements for Cut Tomatoes**

- Kept cold: 41°F or less
- Kept hot: 135°F
- Whole, uncut: room temperature until cut
- After cutting: cooled to 41°F within 4 hours

### **Other Foods at Risk**

Unprocessed foods containing cut tomatoes:

- salads
- salsas
- premade sandwiches with cut tomatoes

Since 1990, at least 12 multi-state foodborne illness outbreaks have been associated with different varieties of tomatoes. From 1996-2006, 17% of produce-related outbreaks reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were associated with tomatoes.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 76 million people become ill from foodborne illness, resulting in 325,000 hospitalizations and as many as 5,000 deaths per year.

*\* The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment issued Retail Food Interpretation #9901 listing cut tomatoes as a potentially hazardous food, on November 21, 2008.*