

To Pasteurize or not to Pasteurize: That is the Question. Whether it is Nobler...

When you go to the store to buy milk it is all pasteurized. The milk goes from the farm to the dairy processor who heats the milk to a temperature that doesn't cause the milk to curdle but is hot enough to kill harmful bacteria. It is then rapidly cooled. The process prevents diseases such as tuberculosis, brucellosis, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and Q-fever. It also kills harmful bacteria like Salmonella and Listeria. Both of these bacteria are often in the news for causing foodborne illness. The regulation for requiring milk to be pasteurized is based on public health and is aimed at preventing illness.



Pasteurizing milk sounds like a process that everyone could support. But there is another side to the story. Some people believe raw milk is nutritionally superior to pasteurized milk. European cheese makers view raw milk cheeses as of superior quality. Many argue that people should have the choice to take the health risks based on what they perceive as the health and life style benefits they will gain from their choice.

As we examine the controversy, both sides offer claims about the value of pasteurization versus consuming raw milk. Some states ban the sale of raw milk, but many do not. How do you think the regulation of milk should be decided?

For Reflection and Discussion:

If people want to consumer raw milk should they have the right to take the risk involved?

If individuals take the risk and become ill, should they personally bear all the costs of that illness?

Government regulations generally prevent the sale of cheese that is made from raw milk unless that cheese is aged for 60 days or more. Should people be able to choose?

Should parents be able to feed babies and children raw milk? (The babies and children can't make their own decision so the parents are assuming the risk for them.)