

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Draft National Food Safety Standard for Prepared Dishes
Notified

Country: China - People's Republic of

Post: Beijing

Report Category: FAIRS Subject Report, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety, WTO Notifications

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Report Highlights:

On February 24, 2026, China notified the WTO of the National Food Safety Standard for Prepared Dishes under reference number G/SPS/N/CHN/1358. This new draft standard stipulates the definitions for prepared dishes, food safety control measures, nutrition and quality requirements, and related physical and chemical indicators. Comments may be submitted to the China's SPS National Notification and Enquiry Center at sps@customs.gov.cn until April 25, 2026. This report provides an unofficial translation of the notified standard.

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Report Summary:

On February 24, 2026, China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) and the National Health Commission (NHC) notified the National Food Safety Standard for Prepared Dishes to the World Trade Organization (WTO) under [G/SPS/N/CHN/1358](#).

China's rapidly growing prepared dishes industry prompted the development of this new draft national food safety standard, which aims to regulate producers and distributors while addressing consumer concerns about safety and nutrition.

The draft defines what qualifies as a prepared dish and establishes food safety controls, nutritional and quality requirements, and relevant physical and chemical indicators. Notably, it prohibits the use of food preservatives in prepared dishes and encourages manufacturers to adopt improved processing, storage, and transportation methods to shorten shelf life, which must not exceed 12 months.

This report provides an unofficial translation of the notified standard. Comments may be submitted to China's SP National Notification and Enquiry Center at sps@customs.gov.cn until April 25, 2026. Stakeholders should conduct their own review of the regulations to assess any market or regulatory effect on their business.

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Prepared Dishes (draft for comments)

Foreword

1 Scope

This Standard specifies the definition of prepared dishes and the requirements for raw materials, use of food additives, production processes, nutritional quality, packaging, labeling, distribution processes, and product indicators.

This Standard applies to the production and distribution of prepared dishes.

This Standard does not apply to staple foods, pre-cut vegetable products, ready-to-eat foods, or dishes prepared in central kitchens.

2 Terms and Definitions

2.1 Prepared Dishes

Preprepared dishes

Prepackaged dish products are made from one or more edible agricultural products and their processed products, with or without seasonings or other auxiliary ingredients, with no addition of preservatives, and through industrial pre-processing (such as stirring, marinating, tumbling, shaping, stir-frying, deep-frying, roasting, boiling, steaming, etc.); they may or may not be accompanied by seasoning packets and must be heated or fully cooked before consumption. This excludes staple foods, pre-cut vegetables, ready-to-eat foods, and dishes prepared in central kitchens.

2.2 Heating

The process of reheating pre-processed and cooked prepared dishes to an appropriate state and temperature for consumption before eating.

2.3 Cooking

The process of thoroughly cooking pre-processed but not fully cooked prepared dishes through stir-frying, deep-frying, roasting, boiling, steaming, etc., until ready for consumption.

2.4 Inner Packaging

Packaging that directly contacts prepared dishes.

3 Raw Material Requirements

3.1 Raw materials shall comply with relevant food standards and applicable regulations. Spoiled or deteriorated raw materials shall not be used.

3.2 Pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues, contaminants, mycotoxins, radionuclides, etc., in raw materials shall comply with the provisions of GB 2763, GB 31650, GB 2762, GB 2761, GB 14882, respectively.

3.3 Livestock and poultry products, aquatic products, eggs, grains, edible fungi, starch products, etc., shall comply with GB 2707, GB 2733, GB 2749, GB 2715, GB 7096, GB 2713, respectively. Seasonings shall comply with GB 31644, GB 10133, etc.

3.4 Certificates and invoices shall be obtained for raw materials. The source, production date, and shelf life (if applicable) shall be truthfully recorded and used only after verification. When purchasing food raw materials, copies of supplier permits and licenses, product qualification conformity certificates, and vouchers shall be verified and retained.

3.5 The establishment of stable supply channels is encouraged to ensure raw materials are safe, reliable, and traceable.

4 Requirements for the Use of Food Additives

4.1 Preservatives shall not be added during production and processing. Only food additives permitted under GB 2760 for various food categories may be used as necessary for production, and they shall comply with relevant quality specifications.

4.2 Where food additives other than preservatives are used, their technological necessity shall be fully evaluated. Additives shall not be used unless necessary, and the variety and quantity of the food additives used shall be minimized as much as possible.

4.3 The use of food additives shall not reduce the nutritional value of the food itself.

4.4 Food additives shall not be used to conceal spoilage or deterioration, nor to conceal inherent defects in food or arising during processing. Additives shall not be used for adulteration, falsification, or fraudulent purposes.

5 Production Process Requirements

5.1 Production shall comply with GB 14881. Products subject to specific hygiene specifications shall also comply with those specifications.

5.2 Frozen raw materials shall be thawed in accordance with relevant technical specifications. Repeated thawing shall be avoided.

5.3 When using and adding ingredients, the date and quantity of addition shall be truthfully recorded.

5.4 Water in contact with food shall comply with GB 5749. Where special water quality requirements apply, appropriate water treatment equipment or facilities shall be provided.

5.5 Food additives shall be stored in dedicated warehouses (areas) clearly marked “Food Additives.” They shall be used according to the “first-in, first-out” or “near-expiry first-out” principle. Disposal shall be handled in a timely manner if abnormal sensory conditions are found.

5.6 Operational areas shall be reasonably arranged according to production processes, operational needs, and cleanliness requirements. Effective separation measures shall be taken to avoid cross-contamination.

5.7 Pre-processing workshops using fresh aquatic products shall have independent slaughtering/shell removal, cleaning, and washing areas. Pre-processing workshops using fresh fruits and vegetables shall have independent sorting and washing areas.

5.8 Cleaning facilities and utensils for raw materials of livestock and poultry meat, aquatic products, plant materials, eggs, etc., shall not be mixed. Where mixed usage of cleaning facilities and utensils is unavoidable, thorough cleaning and disinfection shall be conducted. The use of equipment for peeling, sorting, grading, cutting, and preservation is encouraged to improve level of intelligence for the raw materials processing.

5.9 Appropriate processing procedures, pre-processing, packaging, and sterilization techniques shall be selected according to raw material and product characteristics.

5.10 Inner packaging operations shall be conducted in clean areas. Environmental temperature and operation time shall be reasonably controlled according to product characteristics, storage and transportation, and distribution requirements. When necessary, the humidity of environmental temperature for inner packaging operation shall be controlled.

5.11 Appropriate cooling, refrigeration, and freezing facilities and equipment shall be provided and maintained in operation. When products require freezing, they shall rapidly pass through the maximum ice crystal formation zone, and the central temperature of the products after freezing shall not exceed -18°C . Refrigerated products shall have a central temperature between 0°C and 10°C .

5.12 Appropriate storage and transportation conditions shall be selected based on product characteristics and food safety requirements. Products shall not be stored together with toxic, harmful, or odorous substances to avoid cross contamination.

5.13 The adoption of advanced equipment suited to the development of prepared dishes is encouraged to improve intelligent processing and production efficiency.

6 Nutritional Quality Requirements

6.1 The principle of balanced nutrition shall be followed through reasonable ingredient combinations and appropriate cooking methods to maintain the nutritional characteristics of the dishes.

6.2 Advanced technologies or equipment should be adopted to the greatest extent possible to preserve the nutritional components of raw materials, reduce nutrient loss, and meet food safety, nutritional, and consumer sensory quality requirements.

6.3 Overcooking shall be avoided during cooking.

6.4 Preservation techniques such as modified atmosphere preservation, ice-temperature preservation, and nutrition and flavor stabilization technologies such as non-thermal processing and encapsulation are encouraged to be used to improve product quality (taste, flavor, and texture) and degree of restoration of taste.

6.5 Control the addition amount of cooking oil, salt, and sugar during processing is encouraged to meet the public demand for reduced oil, reduced salt, and reduced sugar.

6.6 On the premise of ensuring food safety, manufacturing enterprises shall comprehensively consider nutritional quality, raw material characteristics, production processes, storage and transportation conditions, packaging performance, consumption methods, and product features when reasonably determining a product's shelf life. Enterprises are encouraged to shorten the shelf life as much as possible by optimizing production processes and storage and transportation methods. The maximum shelf life of the products shall not exceed 12 months.

7 Packaging Requirements

7.1 Packaging shall be reasonably designed and processed according to product characteristics, to meet safety requirements during production, storage, transportation, distribution, and heating/cooking processes of the prepared dishes.

7.2 Inner packaging materials shall comply with GB 4806.1 and related standards. Packaging materials shall have adequate barrier properties. Packaging materials for frozen products shall also have sufficient cold resistance to ensure the product's intended flavor and quality.

7.3 For products that are heated and cooked with packaging, its inner packaging materials shall be heat-resistant, and shall not stick, discolor, or deform when heated.

7.4 Products shall be completely packaged, with no obvious deformation, defects, or damage. Sealed packaging shall be intact, with tight and secure seals, free from damage, and without any leakage.

7.5 Outer cartons shall be clean, dry, sturdy, and undamaged.

7.6 The use of green and environmentally friendly new packaging materials is encouraged.

8 Labeling Requirements

8.1 Food labels shall comply with GB 7718.

8.2 Nutrition labeling shall comply with GB 28050.

8.3 For preprepared dishes whose product name mentions a specific ingredient or component, the input quantity of that ingredient or component, or its proportion in the finished product, shall be indicated. For preprepared dishes whose product name does not contain any specific ingredient or component, the input quantities or proportions in the finished product of the first three ingredients listed in the ingredient list (excluding water) shall be indicated. If fewer than three ingredients are used, all ingredients (excluding water) shall be indicated.

8.4 Storage, transportation conditions, and preparation instructions shall be indicated. Products already fully cooked shall indicate “Heat or reheat before consumption.” For pre-processed products that are uncooked or not fully cooked, the label shall indicate “Cook before consumption.” Packaging materials that cannot be heated or cooked together with the product shall be clearly indicated.

9 Operation Process Requirements

9.1 Storage, transportation, and distribution requirements shall be determined based on product characteristics.

9.2 Storage, transportation, and distribution shall comply with GB 31621. Refrigerated and frozen products shall comply with GB 31605 and meet temperature requirements for the products.

9.3 Transportation vehicles shall be clean and shall not carry toxic or harmful substances to avoid cross contamination.

9.4 Operation shall be conducted under specified storage and transportation conditions.

9.5 When using preprepared dishes in catering services, it is encouraged for businesses to inform consumers about the use of preprepared dishes processed in different ways, to facilitate consumers’ understanding of the relevant information.

10 Product Indicator Requirements

10.1 Sensory requirements should comply with Table 1.

Table 1: Sensory Requirements

Item	Requirement	Testing Method
Appearance	The packaging is intact, with no obvious deformation, defects, or damage.	Observe the product's appearance; open the package (frozen products should be thawed) and examine the color and form under natural light, checking for any foreign subjects or impurities; rinse the mouth with warm water, prepare the product according to the consumption method indicated on the package, then taste it and smell its odor separately.
Color and status	The product has a color and status consistent with its contents.	
Foreign subject	No visible foreign subjects.	
Taste and odor	It has the taste and odor characteristic of the product, without any abnormal odors such as sourness, staleness, putrid smell, or rancidity caused by spoilage or deterioration.	

10.2 Physical and chemical indicators should comply with Table 2.

Table 2: Physical and Chemical Indicators

Item	Indicators	Testing Methods
Peroxide value ^a (calculated on a fat basis) /(g/100g) ≤	0.25	GB 5009.227
Histamine ^b / (mg/kg) ≤	150	GB 5009.208
^a Applicable only to products containing animal-derived foods, nuts and seeds, or edible fats and oils, with a fat content of not less than 5 g/100 g. ^b Applicable only to high-histamine fish products. High-histamine fish refer to marine fish with dark green skin and red flesh, such as mackerel, scad, horse mackerel, chub mackerel, bonito, tuna, Pacific saury, Spanish mackerel, spotted mackerel, sardines, etc.		

10.3 Contaminant limits shall comply with Table 3.

Table 3: Contaminants Limits

Item	Indicators	Testing Methods
Lead (calculated on Pb) /(mg/kg) ≤	0.3	GB 5009.12
Chromium (calculated on Cr) / (mg/kg) ≤	2.0	GB 5009.123
Benzo[a]pyrene ^a / (μg/kg) ≤	5.0	GB 5009.27
^a Applicable only to products containing aquatic products or meat that are processed using smoking, roasting, or grilling processing methods.		

10.4 Prepared dishes produced through commercial sterilization should comply with requirements for commercial sterilization and use testing methods according to GB 4789.26. For

prepared dishes that require heating and are not produced through commercial sterilization, the microbial limits should comply with the provisions of Table 4.

Table 4: Microbial Limits

Item	Sampling scheme ^a and limits (unless otherwise specified, expressed in CFU/g or CFU/mL)				Testing Methods
	n	c	m	M	
Salmonella	5	0	0/25g (mL)	-	GB 4789.4
Staphylococcus aureus	5	1	100	1000	GB 4789.10
Listeria monocytogenes	5	0	0/25g (mL)	-	GB 4789.30
Vibrio parahaemolyticus ^b	5	1	100 MPN/ g (mL)	1000 MPN/ g (mL)	GB 4789.7
Diarrheagenic Escherichia coli ^c	5	0	0/25g (mL)	-	GB 4789.6

a. Sampling procedures shall be performed in accordance with GB 4789.1, and sample collection and processing shall be performed in accordance with the corresponding standards of GB 4789.

b. Applicable only to products containing aquatic animals.

c. Applicable only to products containing beef.

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Attachments:

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