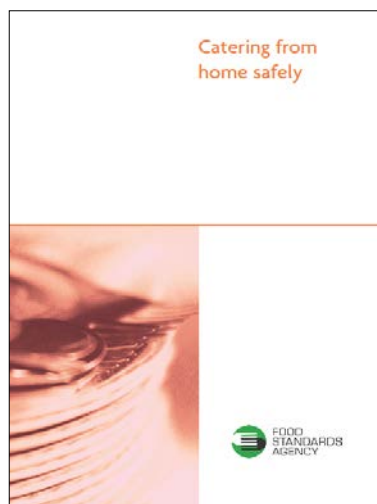


## Preparing Food at Home: Advice and Legal Requirements

### Introduction

This advice is aimed at people preparing food for people other than their immediate family either:

- a) on an irregular voluntary basis (eg. weddings, birthdays or other group events) or
- b) for commercial purposes to 'sell' (this definition in food safety law includes to give away) either direct to the final consumer eg at farmer's markets or to food businesses such as cafés, butchers etc. to sell on.



If you fall within category a) please consult the Food Standards Agency's booklet, 'Catering from home' which you can find on our website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/foodbusiness>

The rest of this guidance is aimed at those in category b)

Please note if you only prepare cakes from home we have prepared a separate guidance sheet.

### Preliminaries

#### 1. AVOID WHERE POSSIBLE

As a general rule we recommend you do not prepare food for large numbers from home because most domestic kitchens are not properly equipped and more things could go wrong.

#### 2. REGISTRATION

Your home may well have to be registered with the Council as a food business. This is free, and there is only one simple form to fill in, but it is a legal requirement and you can be prosecuted if you do not register before starting. You can register online at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/foodbusiness> or call us on the number at the end of this advice sheet.

#### 3. PLANNING PERMISSION

Depending on the type and amount of food you prepare you may need planning permission to run a business from home, so take advice from the planning department of the council.

#### 4. BUSINESS RATES

You may have to pay increased rates if you use part of your property for a business. Contact the Revenues Section of the council for advice.

## 5. INSURANCE

Depending on the type and amount of food you prepare you might need to inform your home insurance provider to ensure you are covered for business use. You should consult your solicitor or insurance agent about this.

## 7. FOOD SAFETY LAW

The laws on food safety apply just the same to a business run from home as they do to all other commercial premises. You will be liable to regular inspections by officers from the Council's environmental health service, and you may face legal action if you are found to be breaking the food hygiene laws. This also applies if you use a kitchen somewhere else to prepare food, for example a village or community hall kitchen. You might wish to talk to an Environmental Health Officer and your solicitor about the legal aspects and the problems you could face.

## 8. LABELLING

You should consider people with food allergies and have an appropriate warning on your food. New legislation requires you to inform customers if the food you sell contains any of the 14 listed allergens. For more information go to: <http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/allergy-guide>. In addition you should consider a suitable shelf life. If you are not selling direct to the final consumer but to a caterer to sell on you will require more detailed labelling and you are advised to contact our Trading Standards team for advice or go to the Trading Standard's Business Companion website, details at end.

## 9. TRACEABILITY

You are required by law to keep a record of where you bought your ingredients (the items, who from and when) for traceability purposes and if supplying other retailers/caterers to sell your food on you must keep records of who, when and what you supplied them. This is in case there is a food alert and you need to identify where you bought food from or you need to withdraw the food you sold

## Management procedures



The proprietor of a food business needs to identify steps in the activities of the business that are critical to ensuring food safety. Having identified those steps, the proprietor needs to ensure that adequate safety procedures are identified, implemented, maintained and reviewed in order to control the potential food hazards. These controls may include temperature control, cleaning, avoiding cross contamination, thorough cooking of food, personal hygiene etc. It has been a legal requirement since January 2006 to have a documented food safety system in place commensurate with the size and risk of your

business. The Government have introduced a pack to help businesses comply with this requirement called Safer Food Better Business which can be downloaded at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/sfbb>

Our Food Safety Advisors can assist you with tailoring this pack or another to your business.

## Training

You may need to attend a food hygiene training course. One of the main requirements of the law is that all food handlers must know enough about food safety to allow them to work safely. This usually means passing a training course in food hygiene, at a level which is appropriate to the type of food being prepared. We can offer advice



about what level of training you would need and our department runs regular courses. Further information can be found on our website, see contact details at end of this advice sheet.

## Kitchen Requirements

Domestic kitchens are not designed for commercial use and so might need some alteration to comply with the food safety laws. Common problems include the following:-

- Access to a wash basin just for washing hands.
- A toilet or bathroom which opens directly on to the kitchen.
- Decorative finishes which are not “easily cleanable” as required by the law eg bare wood, artex ceilings.
- Domestic quality equipment which is not up to the standard needed for commercial use.
- Not enough storage or refrigeration space for large volumes of food.
- Inadequate ventilation leading to condensation, mould growth, and damage to decoration.
- Problems with keeping the kitchen free of flies, ants, and other sources of contamination.
- Limited space and worktops so that “cross contamination” (the spread of harmful bacteria) becomes difficult to prevent.
- Access to the kitchen by children, pets, or other people, which can make good hygiene difficult.
- Separating family use of the kitchen from business use can be very awkward, but is essential for good food hygiene



## Work Surfaces and Equipment

- All food contact surfaces (work tops, cutting boards etc) must be in sound condition, easy to clean and disinfect. Traditional domestic structural finishes may be satisfactory if they can be kept clean and are maintained in good repair eg laminate worktops but bare wooden finishes are unacceptable. For more comprehensive food production it may be necessary to invest in commercial equipment.
- All equipment used in the preparation of food must be suitable for food use, in good condition, easy to keep clean and if necessary disinfect. The use of wooden equipment such as cutting boards is not recommended, as they cannot be effectively disinfected.



## Cleaning and Disinfection

There must be provision for cleaning and disinfecting work surfaces, equipment and utensils with a supply of hot and cold water.

- Where possible use a dishwasher for equipment
- Clean as you go and do not allow germs to build up on surfaces. Pay particular attention to



- handles, switches etc where germs can be transferred to hands
- It is good practice and essential if handling raw meat and vegetables to use a food safe antibacterial spray to disinfect food contact surfaces after first cleaning them
- Dirty, damp cloths are a perfect breeding ground for bacteria and can spread germs easily on surfaces and equipment so it is important to wash or replace them regularly. Ideally, different coloured cloths should be used for different jobs to stop harmful bacteria spreading.
- If using re-usable cloths, make sure they are thoroughly washed, disinfected and dried between tasks (not just when they look dirty). Ideally, wash them in a washing machine on a hot cycle. If you notice dirty cloths in the kitchen, remove them for cleaning immediately or throw them away.

## Personal Hygiene

- Appropriate hand washing facilities must be provided nearby. In premises used for commercial food preparation where raw meat, vegetables or salads are prepared a separate hand basin in the kitchen is required (where there is a one and a half sink the half sink can be used for the hands).
- Wash hands regularly with warm water and soap to keep them clean. Always wash them before touching food, after using the toilet, after touching pets or the dustbin, and when they look dirty.
- Hands should also be washed frequently while preparing food, especially between handling raw and ready to eat foods.
- All food handlers must wear suitable clean and where appropriate, protective, clothing. Depending on the type of food, this may be just an apron.
- No person who may be suffering from a disease likely to be transmitted through food should be allowed to work with food. (e.g. vomiting, diarrhoea, viral infections, etc)
- If you have any cuts or grazes on exposed areas, make sure these are kept covered with a waterproof dressing. Don't wipe your hands on the tea towel, use a separate kitchen towel.



## Food storage



Inappropriate storage is one of the most common faults reported as contributing to food poisoning outbreaks. Food is often left unrefrigerated for prolonged periods.

- Don't take chances. Ensure you've got the fridge and freezer capacity needed to keep food cool and safe.
- Domestic fridges are not designed to cope with the large amounts of food prepared in the home for functions therefore you might need to invest in a commercial refrigerator
- Check food labels for storage instructions, and then follow them.



- In case there are any drips from raw meat, poultry or fish, keep these items at the bottom of the fridge, below where any ready to eat food is stored, and in a leak proof container. Protect the salad tray from any drips too.
- Keep raw and ready to eat food separate.
- Don't clutter up the fridge with alcohol and soft drinks. They do not need to be refrigerated. Maximise the available fridge space for perishable items.

## Temperature Control

### a) Keeping food cold

It is important to keep perishable foods in the fridge particularly in the summer, as most bacteria grow above 5°C. Remember:

- Don't overload your fridge. The efficiency of the fridge will suffer if the cooling air circulating within it cannot flow freely
- The coldest part of your fridge should be kept between 0°C and 5°C. Use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature regularly.
- Keep the fridge door closed as much as possible to prevent the temperature rising inside.
- Prepare food that needs to be kept in the fridge last. Don't leave it standing around at room temperature for too long as this can allow harmful bacteria to grow.
- Cooked foods that need to be chilled should be cooled as quickly as possible, preferably within an hour. Avoid putting them in the fridge until they are cool because this will push up the temperature of the fridge.
- To cool hot food quickly, place it in the coolest place you can find - often not in the kitchen. Another way is to put the food in a clean, sealable container and put it under a running cold water tap or in a basin of cold water, or use ice packs in cool bags. Where practical reduce cooling times by dividing foods into smaller amounts.
- Once the food is prepared, getting it to where the function is being held can be a problem. This can be particularly difficult when there are large quantities of perishable food involved. Use cool boxes.



### b) Cooking

Cooking food thoroughly is the key to killing most of the harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. Large joints of meat or whole poultry are more difficult to prepare safely, so take care with them. Domestic ovens may not have the capacity to handle the amounts of food needed to be cooked for functions, particularly if large joints of meat and whole poultry are involved.

- Make sure meat and poultry are fully thawed before cooking or expected cooking times might not be long enough. You can thaw food in the fridge, by microwaving or covered at room temperature overnight.
- Use any cooking instructions on the packaging as a guide, but always check that the core temperature of the food is piping hot. It is recommended that you use a probe thermometer and check the core temperature reaches a minimum of 75°C.
- When reheating food make sure it is also piping hot all the way through to 75°C and
- Do not reheat it more than once



- High risk foods stored hot must be kept at a temperature of 63°C or above.
- Take proper care with leftovers. Throw away any perishable food that has been standing at room temperature for more than a couple of hours, and throw away any food scraps.
- Store leftovers in the fridge and eat within 48 hours.

## Preparing Food



Cooking for large numbers can mean more people in the kitchen at the same time and there are likely to be greater quantities of raw and ready to eat food. More pots, pans, plates and utensils will be used; there will be more washing up and greater problems keeping worktops clean.

Here are some basic rules that will help you keep food safe:

- Separate raw and ready to eat food at all times, during storage and preparation. If raw food is allowed to touch or drip onto ready to eat food, harmful bacteria can be transferred onto the ready to eat food.
- Don't use the same knife or chopping board for raw meat, ready to eat foods and raw fruit and vegetables unless they are cleaned thoroughly between uses.
- When preparing food, bacteria can also be spread from hands, cloths, knives and chopping boards, so make sure these are all cleaned thoroughly after contact with raw food.

The transfer of bacteria from these items or raw meat and vegetables to ready to eat food is called cross contamination and is a major cause of food poisoning.

## Transporting Food

- When transporting food ensure it is covered to prevent it becoming contaminated by dust or any other foreign bodies
- High risk foods such as meat, fish or dairy or cooked vegetables must be transported at the appropriate temperatures eg if it is hot it should be kept above 63°C, if cold at 8°C or below unless the transportation time is short
- You will also need to check that the facilities at the place where the function is being held are adequate for keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Adequate fridge and cooker capacity there is just as important as in the home



## Finally Ten Top Tips to Remember

1. **Take chilled and frozen food home quickly** - then put it in your fridge or freezer at once.
2. **Prepare and store raw and cooked food separately** - keep raw meat and fish at the bottom of your fridge.
3. **Keep the coldest part of your fridge at 0° - 5°C** -get a fridge thermometer.
4. **Check 'use by' dates** - use food within recommended period.



5. **Keep pets away from food** and dishes and worktops.
6. **Wash hands thoroughly** before preparing food, after going to the toilet or handling pets and after handling raw meat, fish, vegetables and salads
7. **Keep your kitchen clean:** clean as you go and remember to disinfect surfaces after handling raw meat and vegetables and when you finish work
8. **Do not use raw eggs in uncooked or lightly cooked foods** such as home made mayonnaise, mousse, cake icing, use pasteurised eggs instead
9. **Cook food well** - follow the instructions on the pack. If you re-heat make sure it is piping hot.
10. **Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold** - don't just leave them standing around at room temperature.

Should you require further information or help please visit our website on [www.reading.gov.uk/foodbusiness](http://www.reading.gov.uk/foodbusiness) or contact us on 0118 937 3787 or by e-mail at: [consumer.protection@reading.gov.uk](mailto:consumer.protection@reading.gov.uk)

You can also refer to the Trading Standard's Business Companion website: <https://www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/food-and-drink> which gives free information on all aspects of starting a new business.

Thanks to the food safety teams at Coventry and York City Councils and Tendring District Council in compiling this advice