

Food Safety for Food Premises



Why is food safety important?

Providing safe food is the most important thing you can do as a food operator. Besides the serious health effects of not doing so, not providing safe food, and taking precautions in food handling is very damaging to your business.

The following are a few things that you need to consider. This is not an exhaustive list, and you should contact your local Environmental Health Officer for further advice and information if you are thinking of setting up a food business, or would like further information.

From the beginning...

You need to consider how your food is treated right from when it is ordered and delivered to your premises.

It is important to use reputable suppliers, and to thoroughly check all food as it comes in. Things to look for are:

- Best before and use by dates
- Damaged packaging
- Temperature – has it been transported in a refrigerated vehicle? Is the food still frozen/cold?

You shouldn't accept any food that is damaged or has been stored at the incorrect temperature.

All chilled / frozen food must be put into fridges / freezers immediately upon delivery. Chilled, frozen and readily perishable food should only be delivered while you are open.

Clean premises are safe premises

Hands and hygiene

Hands should be cleaned with soap, warm water and a nailbrush and dried thoroughly before handling any food. Hands should also be washed between tasks and after using the toilet, handling rubbish, money, or cleaning equipment, and whenever they become dirty. Disposable gloves can be worn, but must be changed between handling raw and cooked food or whenever you would normally wash hands. Hands still need to be washed before wearing gloves. Any cuts or sores must be covered with a bandage and a glove worn over top.

It is important that all staff wear clean clothes and protective clothing such as aprons. Hair should be tied back or preferably a hat worn. Remember to take aprons off before going to the toilet.

Equipment and kitchens

All equipment and surfaces that come into contact with food must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitised before use, including:

- Cutlery, plates, cups
- Storage containers
- Chopping boards and knives
- Benches

All other equipment and surfaces should be cleaned regularly, even if they don't come into direct contact with the food, including:

- Floors, walls and shelves
- Dishwasher
- Fridges, freezers, chillers, including the seals

A cleaning schedule that lists what has to be cleaned, when and who by is highly recommended. Instructions on how to clean and what products to use are also very useful.

Ensure all cleaning equipment is stored away from food areas, and use separate equipment for toilets, kitchens and outdoor areas to prevent cross contamination between areas.

Keeping it cool

Bacteria that can cause food poisoning grow fast at room temperature. All foods must be kept **at /below 4°C** or **at/ above 60°C** to prevent growth of bacteria.

- Chill all food that is not served straight away
- Chill all perishable food in the fridge/chiller and frozen food in the freezer as soon as it is delivered
- Chill all cooked food within 1 hour of cooking
- All food in the fridge/chiller/freezer must be covered
- Store raw meats at the bottom so they don't drip on other foods, and cooked foods above.

It is important to regularly check the temperature of fridges, chillers and freezers to ensure they are working properly. If they are not fitted with a thermometer, you should place one inside yourself. **Fridges/chillers should be at 2-4°C and Freezers at -18°C.**

Thawing

Remembering that food should be kept below 40C, you need to be careful when thawing food. Frozen food can be thawed:

- In the fridge/chiller overnight (in a container to collect liquid)
- Under running **cold** water
- In the microwave (use immediately for meats and seafood)

Defrosted food must not be refrozen. Do not thaw food at room temperature.

Preparation

Food should be handled in a way that prevents the risk of cross-contamination. Separation is the best way to reduce this risk. Things that you should do are:

- Prepare raw and cooked foods separately
- Use colour coded chopping boards with separate boards for raw red meat, raw poultry, cooked meats, and vegetables
- Thoroughly clean and sanitise all equipment and surfaces before use, and between raw and cooked foods

Limit the time that food is kept at room temperature during preparation. If food is not being cooked or served straight away, it should be chilled to prevent bacteria growth.

Cooking

Food should be cooked at a high temperature for enough time to kill bacteria. Meat and poultry must reach adequate internal temperatures:

- Meat must be cooked until the inside reaches 71°C for minced meats and 63°C for roast meats
- Poultry must be cooked until the inside reaches 77°C and the juices run clear
- If cooking food in the microwave, let it stand for 2 minutes to allow it to finish cooking

A probe thermometer is a simple and inexpensive way of checking temperatures, and is highly recommended. Make sure it is cleaned between each use.

Cooling

Hot food should be cooled quickly to limit the growth of bacteria. To help food cool you should:

- Cool soups, stews, sauces and liquids in a shallow dish not deeper than 10cm.
- Stir often to speed up cooling
- Food can be cooled on the bench for up to an hour, but cover to protect from contamination
- Rice should be cooled in shallow dishes or trays and not in a large bowl or pot

Food on Display

If you are displaying food for sale, make sure it is kept either hot (above 60°C) or cold (below 4°C). All food must be covered or in a cabinet to prevent contamination. To keep food safe:

- Food must be heated to piping hot before being put into a bain marie or pie warmer
- Heat the pie warmer or bain marie before putting food into it, and keep it on while there is food in it
- Stir food in bain maries regularly
- Don't top up dishes of food in bain maries, or mix old and new food
- Keep chilled display units closed and check the temperature often to ensure the food stays cold. It is a good idea to have small amounts that are replaced regularly
- If food is not being kept chilled or hot, then it should not be out for any more than 2 hours
- Keep a record of when food is put on display

Reheating

Reheating food can be risky as there is a greater chance of it being contaminated. When reheating foods:

- Reheat foods quickly
- Heat food to above 83°C (piping hot)
- Do not cool down and re-use food that has been reheated – food can only be reheated once
- If reheating in a microwave, stir the food during heating and allow to stand for 2 minutes afterwards

Storage

Food should be stored properly to prevent contamination.

- Store food in covered containers or cover with plastic food wrap (gladwrap) when storing in the fridge, chiller or freezer
- Do not cover food with damp tea towels, bread bags or shopping bags
- Store food (including dry goods) in clean containers with lids
- Store food that is not being eaten straight away **at /below 4°C or at/ above 60°C**

Staff

A staff sickness policy is an important part of your business. Staff must not come to work while they are ill, particularly with vomiting and/or diarrhoea, or any other infectious illness. The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) has a sickness policy template that is available at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/processed-food-retail-sale/templates/sickness-template.pdf>

Generally, staff should be kept away from work for at least 48 hours after any vomiting and/or diarrhoea has finished. Staff should also not handle any food or work in a food area while they have any open or weeping sores.

When it goes wrong...

If you get a customer who suspects they have got food poisoning from food they have eaten at/from your premises, it is important that you take action immediately. In the first instance you should contact your public health unit - Community and Public Health in Christchurch (03 379 9480). They will talk to the customer to see if it is likely they have got food poisoning, and will help you to determine if there is a problem and work with you to correct any. It is important that you do not ignore any problems, as this will increase the chances of it happening again. Remember, even the best premises can have problems, and not doing anything about it will only make matters worse.

For further information or assistance contact your Environmental Health Officer on 03 365 1667.

