

FOOD HYGIENE

This document gives guidance as to where food legislation applies, where it does not and advises on sensible food hygiene precautions.

Private domestic consumption

Though private domestic consumption falls outside current legislation, it is recommended that the measures noted in Section 3 (Food Hygiene Precautions) be applied to minimise the likelihood of illness brought about by poor food hygiene. The main food laws that apply in the UK (see below) describe private domestic consumption as supplying food to friends and family at picnics, barbecues and dinner parties etc.

It is a matter of some conjecture as to whether all the members of a society would be considered as friends in the event of illness brought about by poor food hygiene, or whether they would be considered as members of the public (see below).

Offering food to members of the public

Offering food to members of the public (for sale or not) requires compliance with the main food laws that apply in the UK (see Section 4 below). Food handlers must receive appropriate supervision, and be instructed and/or trained in food hygiene, to enable them to handle food safely.

Those responsible for developing and maintaining the business's food safety procedures, based on HACCP principles, must have received adequate training. The requirements for training should be seen in the context of the nature and size of the business. There is no legal requirement to attend a formal training course or get a qualification, although many businesses may want their staff to do so. The Foundation Level (Basic) Food Hygiene Certificate is considered a practical and relevant qualification. The necessary skills may also be obtained in other ways, such as through on-the job training, self-study or relevant prior experience. The operator of the food business is responsible for ensuring this happens.

HACCP stands for 'Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point'. It is an internationally recognised and recommended system of food safety management. It focuses on identifying the 'critical points' in a process where food safety problems (or 'hazards') could arise and putting steps in place to prevent things going wrong. This is sometimes referred to as 'controlling hazards'. Keeping records is an important part of HACCP systems.

Many local authorities or local colleges run courses on implementing HACCP. It is suggested that any group or society wishing to prepare or supply foodstuffs to schools seek advice from the local area Education Department. Members of NAReS

are advised to obtain adequate and suitable insurance before offering food to the members of the public.

Food Hygiene Precautions

Storage Temperature

Food should be stored at a temperature of 8°C or less to prevent bacteria from multiplying and the food from spoiling. With some foods this can be achieved by pre-freezing. The point at which defrosting commences will depend upon the external temperature and the type of cold storage unit used (cool box, gas or battery powered fridge). Additional freezer packs or bags of ice can be added to keep the temperature below 8°C.

Cleanliness

Work areas and equipment should be kept clean when preparing food. This can be achieved by using hot soapy water to wash up and wash down all surfaces which should then be rinsed and air dried, where possible. For living history displays, alternatives to modern day cleaning products are either a solution of washing soda and hard soap diluted in hot water or to clean the cooking facilities at a time when no public are about.

Cross-contamination

Raw and cooked foods should be kept separately. Where small amounts of food are to be kept in one storage unit always keep raw meats at the bottom. Separation may also be achieved by the use of thick card, layers of tin foil and plastic containers. Monitor regularly for temperature and also mop up any spillages or blood in your cold storage unit.

Quality of Food

When purchasing food ensure it is of good quality and in date. As soon as possible after purchase put it in the cold storage unit in order to minimise bacteria multiplication.

Cooking Temperature

Cook foods until the CORE temperature has reached 75°C or above. The core is the middle or densest part of food items being cooked. This can be measured correctly by using a food probe which are available from catering shop/suppliers and can be found on the internet.

Any food which has not been consumed within 90 minutes of being cooked may either be cooled to 8°C or less and stored as above or discarded. When reheating correctly stored left over food bring it up to a temperature of 75°C or above before consuming. Any food left over after reheating should be discarded and not reheated a second time.

Principle food laws which apply in the UK

- The Food Safety Act 1990 (as amended) provides the framework for all food legislation in Great Britain – similar legislation applies in Northern Ireland.
- The General Food Law Regulation (EC) 178/2002 is EC legislation on general food safety. Please see the FSA Guidance Notes on this regulation.
- The General Food Regulations 2004 (as amended) provides for the enforcement of certain provisions of Regulation (EC) 178/2002 (including imposing penalties) and amends the Food Safety Act 1990 to bring it in line with Regulation (EC) 178/2002. Similar legislation applies in Northern Ireland.

Sources of useful information:

- Food Standards Agency
- Local authority Environmental Health Department

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