

Food Safety



Introduction

If you serve food then it is important to maintain high standards of food hygiene. Lack of good food hygiene can lead to serious ill health.

Good food hygiene is all about controlling harmful bacteria, which can cause serious illness. The four main things to remember for good hygiene are:

- Cross-contamination
- Cleaning
- Chilling
- Cooking

These are known as the four Cs. They will help you prevent the most common food safety problems.

Do we need to register with the Local Environmental Health Department?

In most cases, No. European Union food hygiene law requires the registration of those operations or activities where food is given away or sold which are deemed to be:

“..undertakings, the concept of which implies a certain continuity of activities and a certain degree of organisation ‘.

The Food Standards Agency [guidance](#) advises that:

“A community hall kitchen will not need to be registered as a food business on its own, even if it used by several volunteer groups. Registration only applies to (e.g.) a group using the community hall kitchen if their food activities meet the description of an undertaking. Of course, groups using halls should ensure the kitchen areas are kept clean. The hall management should ensure it is structurally sound and meets any other relevant legislation.”

A one-off event such as a regatta should not be considered to have “continuity” and should not need to register.

Small regular events, such as the provision of tea and biscuits, or packaged dry foods, are low risk and should not be considered to have “a degree of organisation” and need not be registered.

There are further examples in Box 3 of the Food Standards Agency [guidance](#).

What are the legal requirements for kitchens?

The following information is a summary of the information in the Food Standards Agency Guide, Food Hygiene – A Guide for Businesses. It is available [here](#).

There are special requirements for rooms where you prepare, treat or process food.

- The design and layout of the room must allow good food hygiene practices, including protection against contamination between and during tasks. These do not include dining rooms
- Floor surfaces must be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect
- Wall surfaces must be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect. They must be smooth up to a height appropriate for the work you do
- Ceilings (or, where there are no ceilings, the interior surface of the roof) and overhead fixtures must be constructed and finished in a way that prevents dirt from building up and reduces condensation, the growth of undesirable mould and the shedding of particles
- Windows and other openings must be constructed to prevent dirt from building up. Where open windows would cause contamination, windows must remain closed and fixed while you are producing food
- Doors must be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect
- Surfaces (including surfaces of equipment) in areas where food is handled, particularly those that are touched by food, must be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect
- You must have an adequate supply of hot and cold water and adequate facilities, where necessary, for cleaning, disinfecting and storing utensils and equipment. These facilities need to be made of corrosion-resistant materials, and be easy to clean
- You must have adequate facilities, where necessary, for washing food. Every sink (or other facilities) for washing food must have an adequate supply of hot and/or cold water. The water must be potable (drinking quality). These facilities must be kept clean and, where necessary, disinfected

Do we need food hygiene certificates?

No. Food hygiene certificates are not a legal requirement. If you are selling or handling food at a community event, you need to do so safely – and the information provided below will help you do that – but a qualification is not essential.

General Food Safety advice for small events

When you're making food for large numbers of people, it's important to keep food safe. Here are some general practical tips:

- Plan ahead - if you can prepare food in advance and freeze it, this should make things easier later but do ensure it is properly defrosted when you come to use it
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, using hand sanitisers if hand washing facilities are not available
- Always wash fresh fruit and vegetables
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart
- Do not use food past its 'use by' date
- Keep food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible
- Always read any cooking instructions and make sure food is properly cooked before you serve it. Even if people are waiting to eat, don't reduce cooking times
- Ensure that food preparation areas are suitably cleaned and sanitised after use and wash any equipment you are using in hot soapy water

What about allergens?

If you are a charity or community food operation which is not required to be registered as a food business, you don't have to provide information for consumers about allergens present in the food as ingredients. However, it is recommended that you or anyone else managing charity operations do consider the risks. This would be good practice.

Do any foods need particular care?

Some foods such as raw milk, raw shellfish, soft cheeses, pâté, foods containing raw egg and cooked sliced meats are more likely to cause food poisoning than others.

There is further advice [here](#).

How do we keep food safe at a buffet?

If you are preparing a buffet, be aware that most food needing to be chilled, such as sandwich fillings, should be left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible and not more than four hours. After this time, any remaining food should be thrown away or put back in the fridge but if you do put the food back in the fridge don't let it stand around at room temperature if you serve it again.

What about cakes

There is no rule banning the sale of homemade cakes at community events. Homemade cakes should be safe to eat, as long as the people who make them follow good food hygiene advice and the cakes are stored and transported safely.

At home, people making cakes should follow these general tips:

- Always wash your hands before preparing food
- Make sure that surfaces, bowls, utensils, and any other equipment is clean
- Don't use raw eggs in anything that won't be thoroughly cooked, such as icing or mousse
- Keep cheesecakes and any cakes or desserts containing fresh cream in the fridge

Store cakes in a clean, sealable container, away from raw foods. On the day, people bringing in cakes from home or running the stall should follow these tips:

- Transport cakes in a clean, sealable container
- Make sure that cheesecake and any cakes or desserts containing fresh cream are left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible, ideally not longer than four hours.
- When handling cakes, use tongs or a cake slice

How can we check our food hygiene practices?

Complete the Kitchen Check [here](#).

Legal Requirements

The relevant regulation is the

Regulation (EC) 178/2002,

Regulation (EC) 852/2004

Food Safety Act 1990,

Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013

Food Standards Act 1999

Further Information

For further information see

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/food-hygiene/charity-community-groups>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/foods-that-need-extra-care.pdf>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/hall-provision-guidance.pdf>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/campaigns/kitchen-check/kitchen-check-1/tool>

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/publication/hygienebooklet.pdf>