



This leaflet is not intended as an authoritative interpretation of the law.
We hope you find it helpful in planning your activities.

Remember, we are here to help so please contact us if you
would like further advice!



Fenland District Council

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Advice for charity and community groups providing main meals, hot or ready to eat high risk foods

Advice for making safe, high risk foods to sell
or serve at charity or voluntary sector events



Fenland District Council

Sources of information and advice are as follows

- The Environmental Health service here at Fenland District Council can offer information and advice. Our contact details can be found below.
- The Food Standards Agency website at www.food.gov.uk and search for 'charity groups'.

Further advice about all environmental health matters is available on our website or by contacting your local environmental health officer.

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Q. I'm organising an event in my local community and will provide food. Do I need to let the Council know?

A. Possibly, it depends on a number of things – how large the event is; how often it is held for example. Contact Environmental Health for advice.

Q. I'm a volunteer that sells food at charity events. Do I need a food hygiene training certificate?

A. No. Food hygiene training certificates are not a legal requirement. If you are selling or handling food at a charity event, you need to do so safely but a qualification is not essential. However formal food hygiene training is recommended when catering is proposed. Environmental Health can provide formal food hygiene training; also there are many food hygiene trainers that can be found in business directories. If not all staff are trained then it is advised that they are adequately supervised or instructed by some one who has received food handler training.

Q. I have heard of the phrase "vulnerable people". Which people are particularly vulnerable?

A. If food is being provided to vulnerable people – this can include the elderly, infants less than five years of age, expectant mums and anyone with a serious or long-term medical condition – you should take particular care to ensure the food is safe. It would be advisable to contact Environmental Health if your client group is vulnerable.

Q. What about the water supply and washing facilities

A. There must be an adequate supply of clean, wholesome water available for hand, equipment and food washing. This can be from a container which should hold a minimum of 9 litres per person working at the stall, unless it can be refilled from a clean, wholesome water supply on site. All food stalls must have access to suitable facilities for washing hands, utensils and cleaning equipment. Wash basins for cleaning hands must be provided with hot and cold (or appropriately mixed) running water, materials for cleaning hands and for hygienic drying. If services are not available at the stall/site, insulated containers of a suitable capacity and which can maintain the water at an adequate temperature may be used.

NB: Hand disinfection gels and hand wipes cannot be used as a replacement for hot soapy water. Although they are a useful addition.

Environmental Health - We are here to help

This leaflet gives advice for charity groups and the voluntary sector intending to carry out catering activities using high risk foods such as cooked, ready to eat foods made with meat, fish, poultry, or dairy products contents.

Examples of high risk foods are listed below in the question and answer section of this leaflet.

A leaflet is also available covering the production and sale of food such as biscuits, cakes, cookies etc. These are usually referred to as 'low risk foods

Food Sales at Charity Events

Charity events are a good way of raising funds or providing social activities for those in need and vulnerable groups, but concerns about food poisoning might discourage some voluntary, charitable and other providers. However, by taking some simple steps, events which are both safe and enjoyable, can be held.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

These are the Frequently Asked Questions that Environmental Health are asked by volunteers and charity groups that want to provide food in a village hall, markets or other community settings.

Q. What are high-risk foods?

A. Foods on which bacteria can live, grow and thrive, that are ready to eat, and don't need any further cooking, are described as high-risk foods.

Examples of high-risk foods include:

- Cooked meat and fish
- Hot dogs and burgers
- Pizzas with meat toppings
- Meat pies and pasties
- Gravy, stock, sauces and soup containing meat or fish
- Shellfish
- Dairy products such as milk, cream and soya milk
- Cooked rice

Foods containing these as ingredients are also high risk foods.

Q. I'm making food for lots of people at a fundraising event. What general advice can you give me?

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

- Buy ingredients from a reputable supplier, preferably just before you need them, and make sure that they are well within their "use by" and "best before" dates.

- Keep it simple – mistakes are more likely when you are trying to do too much.
- Always wash hands before preparing food and whilst preparing food as needed e.g. after visiting the toilet, handling uncooked food
- Make sure that surfaces, bowls, utensils, etc. are clean and disinfected before use.
- Keep cheesecakes and any cakes or desserts containing cream or butter icing in the fridge until needed, and make sure they are only stored for a few days at most before being eaten.

Q. What do I need to know about temperature control?

A. Effective temperature control and storage is one of the most important safeguards for controlling the growth of food poisoning organisms.

Please consider the following points:

- High-risk products such as cooked meat and dairy products must be kept at or below 8°C or above 63°C.
- Ideally food should be prepared immediately before service, if this is not possible then the food should be prepared in small batches and kept at the correct temperature.
- Ensure there is sufficient fridge space for the storage of high-risk foods or the use of commercial cool boxes with eutectic freezer blocks.
- Cooked food should reach a core temperature of 75°C. Take particular care when barbecuing as cooking temperatures can be less predictable. Use a probe thermometer and disinfect before and after use.
- Hot food displayed for sale/service should be kept above 63°C
- Thermometers with probes should be used to check temperatures (all probes should be disinfected after use)
- Keep food covered when stored in the fridge
- Vehicles used for transporting high-risk food should be refrigerated. However a cool box will be ok for shorter journeys.
- Protect stored food from unauthorised access and cross contamination i.e. between raw and cooked food.

Q. How do I ensure that food is not contaminated?

A. One of the main risks facing event and mobile catering is to protect food from contamination. This is an important legal requirement:

- Food preparation areas/chopping boards should be cleaned/ disinfected after use.
- Raw and cooked food should be kept separate at all times, raw food should always be stored below cooked food; ideally separate refrigerators should be used.

- Clean sinks after washing/preparing vegetables and raw food.
- Avoid touching food; use tongs, or disposable gloves etc.
- All equipment including knives and containers should be cleaned and disinfected after use.
- Disinfect all cloths regularly and replace as soon as they become worn/damaged. The use of disposable cloths and paper towels is recommended.
- Food must not be stored on the ground and must be protected from risk of contamination.
- Food should be kept at a suggested height of 45cm above ground and protected from the weather.
- Equipment/utensils/crockery should be stored above ground, covered and kept free from contamination.
- Protect food from pests (insects, birds and rodents).

Q. How long can I leave food out on a buffet?

A. Food left out at room temperature can only be left out for a maximum of 4 hours

Q. What cleaning equipment/chemicals would I be expected to provide on site?

- A.** Detergents such as washing-up liquid are useful for cleaning but do not have antibacterial properties. Disinfection is the process where bacteria are reduced to safe limits. Combined cleaners and disinfectants are called Sanitizers’.
- In a kitchen, food-safe cleaning chemicals should be used otherwise they can contaminate or taint foods. As an example, bleach and products containing bleach are not recommended in a kitchen (except possibly to disinfect floors) because they are not ‘food safe’ and can taint food.

When using cleaning chemicals, always follow the instructions on the container.

To assist with cleaning, food equipment and utensils should be made of smooth, non-absorbent materials that are free from gaps and spaces where food could be trapped. Cleaning should be done regularly and all items must be cleaned as soon as possible after they have been used.

Q. How should I transport the food?

A. Transport food in clean, sealable containers, and keep unwrapped food covered - particularly when being sold or served outdoors.