

These notes are intended as a guide to occasional caterers in order that they comply with the Food Hygiene Regulations

You must appreciate that when carrying out any form of catering from your kitchen at home or any other location, where food is to be produced for public consumption, this activity needs to take priority over all other normal domestic uses of this particular room or location.

Try to choose a time to prepare the food when you will not be distracted by other work, your family, etc and when you can totally concentrate on the matter in hand.

The following are simple, common sense practical measures that you can take to minimise the risk of contamination from bacterial or foreign bodies in the food you are preparing and which will prevent complaints.

YOU, THE CATERER

Always thoroughly wash your hands before you start food preparation, using hot water and anti bacterial hand wash soap. Also remove nail varnish (if you wear it), and clean long nails.

Wash your hands regularly throughout the food preparation period drying them with disposable paper towels or kitchen towels.

Take off any rings you may be wearing which contain 'stones'. Preferably you should remove all jewellery before preparing food. Bracelets, earrings, necklaces, etc., can contaminate food (fall into food items you are preparing. They may also harbour harmful bacteria.

Tie your hair back and, if you have long hair, wrap a clean scarf around your head. Avoid using hair grips; these have a tendency to fall out into food !

Always wear a large, clean apron when preparing food. If it should get dirty, have a replacement ready. If the apron has a pocket, take the contents out !

Don't wear a strong perfume when you are doing your preparation work. This can actually taint some food items, i.e. the odour is taken up by the food itself, which gives it an unpleasant taste. Fatty foods are very susceptible.

NEVER SMOKE IN THE KITCHEN

The most important reason is that each time you take the cigarette from your lips (and put it back!) you also pick up on your hands, harmful "Staphylococci" bacteria which live in the area around your nose and mouth and which can cause a particularly nasty form of food poisoning.

BUT remember also who wants to find a used cigarette end or a lump of ash in their food ? !!

If you should sneeze, blow your nose or cough, take care not to contaminate the food you are preparing and always wash your hands after such an event !

If you are suffering from a cold or influenza DO NOT prepare food.

If you have any symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting or indeed any digestive disorder (which can be caused by food poisoning bacteria !), DO NOT handle any food, even for your family. Go and see your Doctor !

If you suffer from any skin injury on your hands or from eczema, impetigo or warts, DO NOT handle food until your skin is completely healed.

If you have a cut, graze or burn on your hands, cover the injured area with a WATERPROOF plaster. Take care to ensure this dressing does not fall into the food you are preparing.

Remember food must never be tasted with fingers. When food has to be sampled while cooking, always use a clean spoon, which must then be washed before you use it again.

THE KITCHEN

Before you even start preparing any food, always ensure that the cat, dog, goldfish and budgie and all other domestic pets, large and small, leave the kitchen. Don't feed the animals in the kitchen when cooking or preparing any food. Don't allow young children in the kitchen when preparing food.

If you have your washing machine or tumble drier in the kitchen, don't use them when making food. Keep all dirty laundry out of the kitchen.

Before using the work surfaces to prepare food, thoroughly clean these surfaces with detergent using a new cloth or disposable kitchen towel, then wipe the surface over with a suitable disinfectant or sanitizer, e.g. Dettol.

Remove all ornaments and plants from the immediate area around the work surfaces on which you are going to prepare food.

If you have a one and a half bowl or a two-bowl sink unit in your kitchen, then keep one sink or the 'half' bowl for washing your hands ONLY. Then you will not run the risk of contaminating food equipment with bacteria from your hands every time you wash them ! Keep a bar of soap and clean towel (for your exclusive use) by your temporarily allocated "wash hand basin". Thoroughly clean the sink unit and drainer before starting your food preparation work and be careful to ensure cleaning chemicals and equipment are not stored in close proximity to food items, food equipment or near preparation surfaces.

EQUIPMENT

All equipment and utensils to be used for food preparation must be kept clean and in good condition.

Such items must be made of suitable materials, which are non-absorbent and easy to keep clean.

Use separate equipment, i.e. knives and cutting boards for the preparation of raw and cooked foods.

Work surfaces and equipment which have been used for the preparation of raw foods, must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before being used again for other foods. Work surfaces should always be disinfected before starting work

THE REFRIGERATOR

Always use fresh, sound ingredients of the highest quality.

After purchase, always take perishable, high risk foods home as quickly as possible and place them immediately into a refrigerator, operating at the correct temperature.

Food stored in a refrigerator needs to be kept at a temperature between 1°C and 5°C. It's a good idea to keep a thermometer, e.g. a "strip" design with a liquid crystal display, in your refrigerator to check it is operating correctly.

This type of thermometer is not expensive and can be purchased from any of the large supermarkets.

Do not allow raw foods or their juices, e.g. blood, to come into close proximity to food items, food equipment or near preparation surfaces.

Any pet food kept in the refrigerator must be covered.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

After cooking, food products that are to be eaten cold must be covered and then left to cool for no more than one and a half hours before placing in a refrigerator.

Do not keep high risk foods between 5°C and 63°C for any longer than is absolutely necessary.

TRANSPORTATION OF FOOD FOR PURCHASE AND FINAL DELIVERY

Containers in which food items are to be transported must be made of suitable hygienic and easy to clean materials and must be provided with tightly fitting lids.

Perishable foods should be transported in insulated containers with frozen blocks to keep the food below 5°C.

If the food is to be transported hot, the containers in which it is carried must maintain the temperature of the food items above 63°C.

No animals may be transported in the vehicle with the food.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

Food on display must be protected from contamination, i.e. properly wrapped or placed in suitable covered containers, and kept off the floor.

Where food is to be wrapped in a 'cling film' type material, then a 'low migration' variety, suitable for contact with all foods should be used.

Food for Buffets must be kept at 8°C or below until just before service. This may mean not putting the food on trays until just before service as the trays may not fit in cool boxes or the fridge. Keep the food on display for a short time only.

For further advice and information please contact us.



GENERAL ADVICE FOR OCCASIONAL CATERERS

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