

PROVIDING FOOD AT COMMUNITY GROUPS AND CHARITY EVENTS

June 2019



This guidance is intended for those having a charity or community event such as a street party, a school fair or fundraiser barbeque and is not intended for registered food businesses. When preparing and providing food it is important that you consider all the food safety implications of that event to keep everyone as safe as you can.

Contents

1. Event organisation

Do I need to register an event?	3
Food hygiene certificates.....	3

2. Food Safety

General good practice	4
Use by dates.....	5
Vulnerable groups	5

3. Allergen information

What is a food allergy	6
Preparing safe food for someone with an allergy.....	6
Which foods are allergens	7

4. Cooking and preparation

Barbecues.....	8
Buffets.....	8
Cakes and baked goods	9
Use of jam jars	9
Food transportation.....	9

5. Contacts

	10
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1. Event organisation

Do I need to register an event?

If you handle, prepare, store or serve food occasionally it is unlikely that you will need to register as a food business. Please get in touch with your [local authority food safety team](#) for more information. You may need to register with your local authority as a food business if you provide food on a regular and organised basis.

Food hygiene certificates

You do not need to have a formal qualification or to have attended recognised food safety courses to make and sell food for charity or community events. However, you need to make sure that you handle food safely. In addition, it may be a requirement from those letting out halls or venues where such events takes place that formal certification is required. Nevertheless, it is not a legal requirement in food law and by following the advice in this guidance you should be able to keep people safe.

If you would like to take part in a course to obtain a food hygiene certificate please get in touch with your local authority Environmental Health Department or contact an awarding body such as the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland where you can find information on where you can do a food hygiene course.

As the regulations do not specify the need for a formal training course or certification for food handlers, children are able to assist with food preparation at charity and community events. However, it is very important that they have adequate supervision to ensure good hygiene practices are followed.



2. Food safety

General good practice

Following the “4Cs” of food hygiene, [cleaning](#), [chilling](#), [cooking](#) and [avoiding cross-contamination](#) will help you prepare, make and store food safely.

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

- Plan ahead – if you can prepare food in advance, keep it cool or freeze it
- Wash hands regularly with soap and running warm water
- Always wash fresh fruit and vegetables
- Don't wash raw meat before cooking it
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate
- Do not use food past its use by date
- Make sure your fridge is between 0-5°C
- 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
- When cooking poultry, rolled meat joints, stews, casseroles, minced meats and meat products, ensure the centre reaches a suitably high temperature, for example 75°C or above
- Even if people are waiting for food don't reduce the cooking times
- Keep pets away from areas where food is being prepared
- Ensure that food preparation areas are suitably cleaned and sanitised before and after use and wash equipment you are using in hot soapy water
- No one should be involved in preparing or serving food if they have had signs or symptoms of food poisoning in the past 48 hours

When serving food it is not necessary for the food handler to wear gloves, it is a personal choice. They are not a substitute for good personal hygiene and can become contaminated with bacteria in much the same way as hands can, even when they are new, and should be kept clean and sanitised in the same way as bare hands.

Gloves can be useful for covering or protecting damaged skin, or protecting hands from risk of developing skin conditions (such as dermatitis, which can be caused by prolonged food handling and wet work such as dish washing). When selecting gloves bear in mind that some people have an allergy to latex or develop one from regular contact. Alternative glove materials include nitrile, vinyl, rubber and plastic.

Use by dates

Use by dates are on perishable foods and show how long the food remains safe to eat or drink. Check and follow the use by dates of the food you serve. Food cannot be supplied in any circumstances if its use by date has passed. This is different from a best before date which is not a food safety concern.

Vulnerable groups

It is important to understand who you are serving because some people are more susceptible to getting food poisoning or becoming seriously unwell with it. Vulnerable persons are those at a higher risk of food poisoning, usually because their immune system does not work so well. These are people who are pregnant, children under 5, elderly people and those with certain long-term medical conditions or on particular drug treatments. Some foods, such as soft cheeses, pâté, raw shellfish and cooked sliced meats are more likely to cause food poisoning in these groups of people.

Vulnerable groups can eat raw or lightly cooked eggs and foods such as soft-boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise as long as the eggs are produced to a high standard, such as under the British Lion Code of Practice or an equivalent scheme. These eggs are considered very low risk of containing Salmonella and safe for vulnerable groups to eat. Eggs that have not been produced to this standard should be cooked through until the white and yolk are solid. For more information on eggs go to [:https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety/at-home/eggs](https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/consumers/food-safety/at-home/eggs)



3. Allergen information

What is a food allergy?

A [food allergy](#) is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. The food the body reacts to is known as the allergen. The symptoms experienced differ from person to person and effects may include:

- [gastrointestinal complaints](#)
- [skin reactions](#)
- [potentially life-threatening anaphylaxis](#) - which can include swelling, clammy skin, difficulty breathing and wheezing, rapid heartbeat, light-headedness/loss of consciousness

Preparing safe food for someone with an allergy

If your activity does not need 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, we strongly recommend that you do so as best practice.

Food allergens cannot be removed by cooking, so it is important that they are managed carefully. The following advice is our guide to best practice when you prepare food, keeping in mind those people with food allergies:

- Double check ingredients listed on pre-packed foods for allergens
- When making foods, clean work surfaces and equipment thoroughly using hot, soapy water to ensure traces of anything you may have cooked before are removed
- Keep a note of the ingredients used in your dish to share with those running the event
- If someone is allergic to something, simply taking it off their plate isn't enough. Even a tiny trace can be enough to cause an allergic reaction
- Provide allergen information to the people attending the event
- Follow advice for [avoiding cross-contamination](#) in the kitchen

If you are unsure whether or not you should be registered, you should speak to your local authority's [Environmental Health department](#). They will be able to advise you regarding signage requirements & general allergen guidance.

Which foods are allergens?

[EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation \(EU FIC\) Annex 2](#) identifies 14 substances or products causing allergies or intolerances which must be identified to consumers when used as ingredients in food:

- celery
- cereals containing gluten - wheat (including spelt and Khorasan), rye, barley and oats
- crustaceans e.g. prawns, crabs and lobsters
- eggs
- fish
- lupin
- milk
- molluscs e.g. mussels and oysters
- mustard
- nuts - almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan, Brazil, pistachio, macadamia/Queensland
- peanuts
- sesame seeds
- soya
- sulphur dioxide and sulphites (where added and is above 10 mg/kg in the final product)

Although there are 14 substances or products causing allergies or intolerances which are identified by EU FIC, people can have allergies to foods which are not included on the list above. The same level of care must be taken when preparing all foods.



4. Cooking and preparation

Barbecues

When you're barbecuing, the biggest risk of food poisoning is from raw and undercooked meat. But following a few simple tips can keep your barbecued food safe and tasty:

- Wash hands after touching raw meat and before handling other food or equipment
- Check the centre of the food – meat isn't necessarily cooked inside just because it looks charred on the outside, use a food thermometer to check the core temperature is 75°C
- Make sure chicken, pork, burgers, sausages and kebabs are cooked all the way through
- If you don't have a food thermometer check there is no pink meat, and juices run clear
- To help cook food thoroughly cook the meat indoors (in a pan, grill or oven), then finish it off on the barbecue for that chargrilled flavour
- Even if people are waiting for food don't reduce the cooking times, serving undercooked meat can give people food poisoning
- Frozen food should be completely thawed before you start to cook it
- Keep raw meat in sealed containers, separate from other foods. That way it won't contaminate them with bacteria
- Use separate plates and utensils for raw meat to avoid cross-contamination with ready-to-eat foods such as bread rolls and salads
- Don't use a sauce or marinade for cooked food that's had raw meat in it
- When the charcoal is glowing red with a powdery grey surface, it's ready for you to start cooking
- Keep food moving on the barbecue, so it cooks evenly

Buffets

Many foods included in a buffet, such as cold meats and sandwich fillings, require chilling and should be left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible and for no more than four hours. After this time, any remaining food should be thrown away or put back in the fridge. If you put the food back in the fridge don't let it stand around at room temperature when you serve it again.

All foods which are to be held hot prior to serving must be kept above 63°C. These foods should be placed in appropriate equipment, for example a pre-heated bain-marie/hot cabinet, as soon as possible after reheating or cooking. Once food has been cooked, if you want to re-heat it for an event it should be chilled as quickly as possible and refrigerated before being re-heated to 82°C. However this is not required of food that would be spoiled by reheating to this level. Remember food should only be reheated once.

Cakes and baked goods

You can serve homemade cakes at community events. They should be safe to eat as long as:

- The people who make them follow good food hygiene advice
- Keep a note of the allergen ingredients
- Make sure that cheesecake and any other cakes or desserts containing fresh cream are left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible
- When handling cakes use tongs or a cake slice
- Store cakes in a clean, sealable container, away from raw foods, somewhere cool and dry
- children can take part in food preparation at charity and community events, but it is very important that they have adequate supervision and good hygiene practices are followed

Using jam jars

It is safe to re-use glass jam jars to supply home-made jam or chutney as long as the jars are free from chips and cracks and are properly washed, and sterilised prior to each use. Well-fitting lids will also minimise any hygiene risks to the food in the jars.

Food transportation

- Food should be transported in clean suitable containers
- Any foods being transported should be kept out of the fridge for the shortest time possible
- For foods that need to be kept cool use clean cool bags or boxes for transportation



5. Who to contact

Local authority food safety team

If you any questions or concerns, please get in touch with your local authority food safety team:

foodstandards.gov.scot/contact-us/local-authorities

Food Standards Scotland

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to enquiries@fss.scot or visit:

foodstandards.gov.scot

REHIS

You may wish to get in touch with REHIS to find out about food hygiene certificate courses in your area:

rehis.com

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