

Food Safety Guidance

Introduction

At certain times clubs, societies and other student groups may hold events that involve the sale, handling, storage, preparation and transportation of food. All groups involved in this type of practice should be aware that they have a duty of care to their members and others who may be consuming the food and that they must take reasonable precautions to ensure that any food they provide is safe. Any food a student group provides that causes people to become ill could result in a group or individual being liable.

Use of External Caterers

Wherever possible and especially when providing specialist or high risk foods, student groups should consider using external providers or the University Catering Services. However, before any catering service is used they should firstly provide as a minimum the following documentation:

- Proof of registration with the Local Authority Environmental Health Department.
- Valid Public Liability insurance.

Groups Preparing/Providing Foods

When groups decide to provide food without using an external catering service they must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that the food is safe for consumption. In particular they must consider the handling, storage, preparation and transportation of all items and as a minimum follow the below guidance provided by the Food Standards Agency:

Good food hygiene is essential for you to make or sell food that is safe to eat. It is very important for you to understand what good food hygiene is and to follow this advice.

Good food hygiene helps you to:

- obey the law
- reduce the risk of food poisoning
- protect your reputation

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 **4 Cs**. They will help you prevent the most common food safety problems.

Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination is when bacteria are spread between food, surfaces or equipment. It is most likely to happen when raw food touches (or drips onto) ready-to-eat food, equipment or surfaces.

Cross-contamination is one of the most common causes of food poisoning. Do the following things to avoid it:

- Clean work surfaces, chopping boards and equipment thoroughly before you start preparing food and after you have used them to prepare raw food.
Ideally, use different chopping boards and knives for raw and ready-to-eat food.
- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after touching raw food.
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart at all times.
- Store raw food below ready-to-eat food in the fridge. If possible, use separate fridges for raw and ready-to-eat food.
- Make sure all involved know about cross-contamination.

Cleaning

Effective cleaning gets rid of bacteria on hands, equipment and surfaces. So it helps to stop harmful bacteria from spreading onto food. You should do the following things:

- Make sure that all involved wash and dry their hands thoroughly before handling food.
- Clean food areas and equipment between different tasks, especially after handling raw food.
- Clear and clean as you go. Clear away used equipment, spilt food etc. as you work and clean work surfaces thoroughly.

Chilling

Chilling food properly helps to stop harmful bacteria from growing. Some foods need to be kept chilled to keep them safe, for example food with a 'use by' date, cooked dishes and other ready-to-eat food such as prepared salads and desserts.

It is very important not to leave these types of food standing around at room temperature. So, make sure you do the following things:

- Check chilled food on delivery to make sure it is cold enough.
- Put food that needs to be kept chilled in the fridge straight away.
Cool cooked food as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge.
- Keep chilled food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible during preparation.
- Check regularly that your fridge and display units are cold enough.

Cooking

Thorough cooking kills harmful bacteria in food. So it is extremely important to make sure that food is cooked properly. When cooking or reheating food, always check that it is piping hot (steaming) all the way through.

It is especially important to make sure that you thoroughly cook poultry, pork, rolled joints and products made from minced meat, such as burgers and sausages. This is because there could be bacteria in the middle of these types of products. They should not be served pink or rare and should be piping hot (steaming) all the way through. Whole cuts of beef and lamb, such as steaks, cutlets and whole joints, can be served pink/rare as long as they are fully sealed on the outside.

In addition to the Food Standards Agency guidance student groups should also consider the following:

Thawing

Thaw/defrost uncooked meats and food in a refrigerator or in cold water. Food should never be thawed at room temperature.

Storage

Always store your foods in suitable, clean and re-sealable containers. Always store cooked foods away from raw foods, especially meats and always at the correct temperatures.

Transportation

Always transport your foods in suitable containers and where possible at the correct temperature. Always limit any time certain foods are un-refrigerated and where possible place foods into refrigerators as soon as you reach your destination.

Allergies

Certain foods such as nuts, shellfish, gluten and milk etc., can cause severe allergic reactions in some people, even in very small amounts. It is vitally important that you know which foods you are providing contain these foods so you can pass this information on. All foods that contain anything that may cause a problem should be labelled. If you are unsure of the contents of a certain food always say you are unsure and that it may cause a problem.

Barbeques

Because of the additional dangers (fire and burns etc.) involved with barbeques student groups, should only use experienced external providers to facilitate any such activities.