

## Food Hygiene

Mary was the obvious choice. She was efficient, fun and loved kids. She had two of her own and anyway, both were coming on the weekend away. So why couldn't she cook? If she had cooked for the four of them at home for the past twelve years surely she could do it for 40 more – it was only a weekend. Another reason for her being the obvious choice for the job was that there was no one else that could be found, despite desperate pleas during the Sunday service, in the notice sheet and via the monthly vicar's letter.

### REALITY BITES!

You arranged to meet Mary at her house one evening to just 'talk it through'. That started the longest series of questions your mind had ever had to grapple with since those dreaded GCSE exams all those years ago....

How much time does it take to peel potatoes for 40? What would you do with the person who had a nut allergy? Couldn't Vicky just forget being a vegetarian for this particular weekend? What would the child from the Muslim home want to eat? And what on earth is a Hobart conveyor dishwasher anyway – a type of space ship?!

Getting a caterer was going to be more complicated than you first imagined? After the event you realised that loving kids and being fun were not the only criteria that needed to be on the job description. An ability to keep pizza hot for an extra half hour when the game ran late on Saturday night somehow had to be included... or perhaps finishing games on time needed to be on your job description ...

### Food Hygiene Regulations

Regulations deal with all aspects of food hygiene; general, product-specific and temperature control rules. Organisations producing or supplying food on a regular basis - even if they do not charge for it, and probably even if "regular" is only once a week - need to register with the local authority's environmental health department. Food safety procedures based on HACCP principles - hazard analysis critical control points - need to be implemented.

Information is available from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) at <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/food-hygiene>

Guidance published by the European Commission says, "Operations such as the occasional handling, preparation, storage and serving of food by private individuals at events such as church, school or village fairs are not covered by the scope of the Regulation", and the FSA's draft guidance on the regulations stated that they would not cover activities such as the occasional preparation of food by individuals or groups for gatherings or for sale at charitable events. But this is not in the FSA's final guidance, and organisations should consult their local environmental health department to confirm whether registration is required. As the FSA said in a letter to a voluntary organisation, "There is a thin line between those very small, informal operations providing food on a regular basis who may be required to register with the local authority as a food operator, and those organising one-off events who do not." **For a residential weekend away or similar check with your district council environmental health department who will advise you whether you need to register or not.**

Even if occasional activities are not covered by the regulations, they are still subject to the General Food Regulations 2004, which prohibit "the placing of unsafe food on the market".

## **Training**

Following the Food Safety Act 1990 a series of guidelines were introduced for those who handle and serve food (as well as suppliers). These now require training to be provided by law for anyone involved in food handling and service. The Basic Food Hygiene Certificate is the standard course. It can be completed in one day and is run regularly throughout the UK.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/food-hygiene/training>

Training should be provided to ensure that food handlers consider cleanliness as a top priority, that they understand how to ensure good hygiene in food preparation both for themselves and any people working with them. It is also about them understanding about the correct handling, storage and preparation and serving of food.

The law says that you must do some training of all food handlers. How you deliver this training is left to some degree up to interpretation but you need to be able to justify what steps you have taken by keeping a written record. We would recommend that at the very least anyone heading up any catering has the nationally recognised Basic Food Hygiene Certificate and that they train other food handlers before the event. Provide check lists and reminders around the kitchen.

It is strongly recommended that you draw up hygiene regulations with the team of caterers so that they all understand the reasons for rules and what is good practice. The Food Standards Agency produce a range of good publications which are available free of charge.

Preparing a Risk Assessment provides you with a process that you use in analysing the risks in handling, cooking and storing food. Consider the whole chain of events that get the food from your supplier to the table.

Written Risk Assessments should be done and a monitor kept on fridge and freezer temperatures on a regular basis. Environmental Health Officers are entitled to inspect your premises and look at the systems you are using.

## **Key Points when Handling Food**

- Clean surfaces, ideally with a non-tainting bactericide, before using to prepare food;
- Separate raw and cooked foods;
- Use separate utensils for raw and cooked foods;
- Wash hands regularly, including palms and backs of hands:
  - before preparing food;
  - between handling raw and cooked food;
  - after using the toilet;
  - after eating, drinking and smoking breaks;
  - after handling refuse and waste materials.
- Cover wounds with waterproof dressings (brightly coloured dressings are best);
- Follow good personal hygiene guidelines, including tying back long hair and cover head;
- Wear suitable protective clothing to prevent contaminating food;
- Defrost food thoroughly before cooking;
- Cook joints of meat thoroughly. It is better to cook two or three smaller joints rather than one large one;

- A minimum quantity of food should be reheated. Where you need to, ensure that food is heated above 82°C for at least two minutes;
- After cooking food, cool it as quickly as possible if it is to go in the fridge;
- Keep food piping hot at above 63°C or cold below 8°C and ideally around 3°C to reduce the risk of growth of food poisoning bacteria;
- Don't keep leftover stock;
- Cover food to prevent contamination;
- Remember gravity. Store raw foods below cooked foods to prevent blood etc. dripping onto cooked food;
- Check refrigerator and freezer temperatures with a thermometer. Record these in a log book.

### **Rules for Refrigeration**

- Do not overload or pack tightly.
- Food should be covered.
- Keep raw food separate from cooked.
- Never place hot food in refrigerators.
- Refrigerators should be serviced regularly.
- Defrost refrigerators strictly in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Clean regularly.
- Check seals for cleanliness and wear and tear.
- Check temperature of chilled foods when delivered.
- Don't store food in open tins.

### **Personal Hygiene Guidelines when handling food**

Anyone involved in running a food operation should have a high standard of personal hygiene which will be reflected in appearance, dress, behaviour and personal cleanliness. High standards of personal hygiene will reduce the risk of contamination and help to prevent food poisoning. The following key points must be followed by all food handlers:

- Wash hands regularly, especially:
  - on starting work;
  - after using the toilet;
  - between handling raw and cooked foods;
  - after breaks for eating, drinking and smoking;
  - after coughing, sneezing or blowing their nose;
  - after touching hair;
  - after handling refuse or waste materials;
  - after handling cleaning chemicals.
- Cover cuts, sores and burns with clean waterproof dressings.
- Wear clean, and where appropriate, protective clothing.
- Keep fingernails short and clean and remove all nail polish.
- Do not wear jewellery other than a plain wedding ring.
- Do not wear strong smelling perfumes or aftershaves.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

During inspections of food premises, the cleanliness of food rooms, equipment and utensils is taken into account in assessing the business. To help ensure the safety of your food, it is important that surfaces and equipment are visually clean and free from high levels of harmful bacteria.

### **Further Information**

This paper has only touched on some of the basics. A lot of information is available, contact:

The Food Standards Agency

Tel: 0845 606 0667 or website [www.foodstandards.gov.uk](http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk)

Ecclesiastical Insurance has a wide range of guidance notes.

<http://www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters/index.aspx>

Or just google 'Food Hygiene Regulations for voluntary groups'

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Registered Office: **Holywell Lodge, 41 Holywell Hill, St Albans, Herts. AL1 1HE**

Switchboard: 01727 854532 Fax: 01727 844469 Web: [www.stalbans.anglican.org](http://www.stalbans.anglican.org)