



COOKING FOR CHURCH MINISTRIES EVENTS

Their health in your hands

This guide aims to help you think about how to prepare food safely for everything from a party for the whole church family, to supporting the Meals Ministry with whole meals, to a single cake for the Cake Ministry team.

If you are preparing food at home and transporting it to the event/person to be eaten it is your responsibility to make sure it does not make people ill.

Catering for your own family is different from catering for other people on behalf of the church because the church as an organisation needs to show how we have taken care of food safety.

A wide range of foods can cause food poisoning if not handled properly. Raw poultry, and occasionally raw eggs, may contain food poisoning bacteria. Meat and meat products, and shellfish have also been identified as the cause of illness. Sauces and desserts that contain raw eggs – including mousses and homemade ice creams – may cause problems too. You also need to be careful with salads and vegetables that will be eaten raw. It is vital that proper precautions are taken during preparation.

Common errors

Problem	Risk
Poor hygiene/cleanliness	Transfers bacteria or contaminants on to food
Poor storage – food inadequately protected from the outside environment	Contamination from the environment such as chemicals or vermin droppings
Poor Storage – Cold foods not kept cold enough – and hot foods not kept hot enough	Allows the growth of bacteria
Inadequate cooking	Bacteria are not killed in the cooking process
Raw and ready to eat food not separated	Transfer of bacteria from raw to prepared

Hygiene and Cleanliness – Illness

If you are not feeling well then stay away from the kitchen and any place you would be in contact with food. This includes a cold or sore throat, boils, spots or a septic wound. Also keep anyone who is ill – or has recently been ill – with diarrhoea or vomiting out of the kitchen, even if they are not handling food. Ask a friend who has none of the symptoms to replace you.

Hygiene and Cleanliness – Hands

Before starting food preparation, wash your hands thoroughly with soap, hot water and a nail brush; Also wash hands after using the toilet, touching pets or the dustbin, between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods and just when they look dirty.

Don't wash your hands in a washing-up sink. Washing up water can be full of debris and bacteria that could linger so use a separate wash hand basin for personal washing. Also, don't wipe your hands on the damp tea towel (for the same reason), use a separate (clean) kitchen towel that's just for your hands or even better use kitchen paper.

Covid-19 – hot soapy water kills the virus in 20 seconds but don't ruin all your care by inadvertently touching your face, nose, hair etc or using anything but a freshly washed and dry towel or paper towel.

If you should graze finger, or burn yourself, cover up the wound straight away with a waterproof plaster. If the plaster gets dirty or wet, replace it.

Hygiene and Cleanliness – Laundry

Please cover your clothes with clean apron or coveralls before you start handling food. If you use any cloth items – oven gloves, dish cloths, tea towels and hand towels make sure they have been washed a minimum of 60° C to ensure cleanliness. Where cooking for others please use freshly washed items (or if you prefer single use disposable items). Keep outdoor clothes and used cloth items outside the kitchen.

Hygiene and Cleanliness – Is the kitchen clean?

Look at the place where you will be cooking; is it in good condition and clean, and can you keep it that way? Before you start work, give the kitchen a thorough cleaning and make sure that you treat all work surfaces, cutting boards, equipment and utensils with a food safe bactericide – check the label to make sure you leave on the surface long enough to be effective.

Hygiene and Cleanliness – Keep out

Don't let young children or animals into the area where you are preparing food. It's risky from the hygiene point of view (who wants dog hair in their dinner!) and safer for them too if they keep away.

Hygiene and Cleanliness – Rubbish

Food waste attracts vermin such as rats and flies which can contaminate food so check the waste bins are clean and do not over fill them. Make sure you dispose of any rubbish in a suitable manner when the bin becomes full. (And make sure that the bin is regularly washed out with a bleach solution!). Foot operated bins, or swing top bins are a good idea, as you do not have to handle a dirty bin lid to dispose of any rubbish. Bins without lids are OK as long as rubbish is not allowed to accumulate.

Now we are clean, dry and properly equipped.....let's think about the food

FOOD – Raw or Ready to Eat

It is essential to keep raw and cooked/ready-to-eat foods well away from each other. E.g. raw meat, fish, poultry and eggs away from foods such as salads, cooked meats and cooked dishes, mayonnaise, and desserts.

Follow these basic rules to help keep food safe.

- Prepare raw and ready to eat food separately.
- Don't use the same utensils (e.g. knife or chopping board) for raw meat, ready to eat food and raw fruit or vegetables unless they are cleaned with hot soapy water and a bactericide between uses.
- Wash dishes, worktops and cutlery with hot water and detergent. Ideally use a dishwasher.

FOOD – Storage

If you are preparing for a large function, there will be large quantities of cooked and uncooked food competing for limited amounts of fridge and freezer space. Inappropriate storage is one of the most common faults contributing to food poisoning outbreaks. Domestic fridges are not designed to cope with the large amounts of food prepared in the home for functions and *the temperature inside can rise if they are overfilled (see chilling below)*. So don't take chances:

- Check you've got the fridge and freezer capacity needed to keep food cool and safe— *there is fridge space in all of the church's premises – talk to the office if you need to use it.*
- Check food labels for storage instructions i.e.
 - Keep the most perishable foods in the coldest part of the fridge – cold meats, quiches and desserts.
 - Keep raw and ready to eat food separate – raw meat, poultry, or fish at the bottom of the fridge in leak proof containers; ready to eat food should be stored above. Protect the salad tray from any drips
- don't use the fridge for wines, beers and soft drinks – they may taste better cold but they don't need to be refrigerated for food safety purposes. Instead keep them in separate ice buckets, cool bags or cold water so maximising fridge space for perishable items. *Contact the office who can arrange a call out for cool bags if you need more.*
- Items should be covered or wrapped using foil, cling film or washable lidded containers.
- Whatever storage container you use please make sure you can add a label onto it. See FOOD – labelling below for what to record.

Food – Chilling

Most bacteria grow quickly at temperatures above 5°C so ...

- The coldest part of the fridge should be between 0°C and 5°C – use a fridge thermometer if you don't have an integral temperature display and check the temperature regularly.

- Don't overload your fridge –the temperature will rise if the cooling air circulating within it cannot flow freely.
- Keep the fridge door closed as much as possible – leaving the door open raises the temperature.
- Prepare food that needs to be kept in the fridge last.
- Don't leave food that needs to be chilled standing around at room temperature. Cooked foods that need to be chilled should be cooled as quickly as possible, preferably within an hour.
 - To cool hot food quickly, place it in the coolest place you can find – often not in the kitchen. Or place the food in a clean, sealable container and put it under a running cold-water tap; in a basin of cold water; or in ice-packed cool bags. Cooling times can be reduced by dividing foods into smaller amounts.
- Avoid putting food in the fridge until it is cool, as this will push up the fridge temperature.

Food – Transport and temperature

Once the food is prepared, getting it to the function at a safe temperature can be an issue.

For frozen and chilled items transport using cool boxes and check that the venue has adequate fridge capacity beforehand. If not, you must ensure that the food will be consumed within 4 hours of being placed in the cool bag.

For hot items are you confident that the temperature will not have fallen below 63°C by the time it is delivered? If you use an insulated bag, delivery takes less than 30 minutes and the food is to be eaten straight away this should be safe. Otherwise, think of delivering something to be reheated. Check beforehand that the venue has adequate facilities to re-heat the food until piping hot. (See cooking below)

FOOD – Cooking

Cooking food thoroughly is the key to killing most of the harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. Domestic ovens may not have the capacity to handle the amounts of food needed for functions, so the first step is to check beforehand that your oven is large enough for the item you plan to cook!

Don't be tempted to cut cooking time because people are waiting to eat – especially when microwaving or barbecuing.

Meat and Poultry

Large meat joints or whole poultry are more difficult to prepare safely, so take special care with them.

- If the meat or poultry is frozen, thaw it thoroughly before cooking, in an area well away from cooked foods. Insufficiently thawed food means the expected cooking times might not be long enough to render the food safe. You can thaw food in the fridge, by microwaving or at room temperature.

- Use any cooking instructions on packaging as a guide, but always check that the centre of the food is piping hot. Temperature probes are cheap and easy to use. Make sure that the inside temperature goes up to 75°C.
- Joints of meat should not be more than 6lbs in weight, and in the case of a poultry carcass, the weight should not exceed 10lbs. It is safer to cook several small turkeys than one large turkey.
- When roasting poultry, the main cavity should not be stuffed as this affects the cooking process.
- If the meat is not going to be eaten straight away, then it should be cooled quickly and placed in a fridge within one and a half hours of cooking.
- Try not to handle the meat after cooking. If it must be handled for slicing etc. make sure it's done immediately before the meat is served.

Eggs

- If you are *making* any foods that involve the use of raw eggs (e.g. mayonnaise, mousse...) you should use a pasteurised egg product, rather than fresh eggs, which are liable to contamination by salmonella food poisoning bacteria.
- Pasteurised eggs are now freely available in most supermarkets or catering suppliers. Alternatively, you may wish to purchase ready-made products which clearly state on the label that the eggs used were pasteurised.
- Keep all egg-based dishes chilled prior to consumption.

Casseroles and other hot meals

- Curries, stews, rice, gravies, sauces and custard should all be cooled quickly after cooking and refrigerated or frozen unless they are to be eaten immediately, in which case they should be kept hot (above 63°C).
- If you have prepared these kinds of foods, then it is better to have a number of small pans for reheating rather than one large pan. In a large pan the centre of the food takes a long time to get to a reasonable temperature during this time bacteria have an ideal opportunity to grow and develop.

Cooked Rice

- Rice is a particular hazard as one serious food poisoning bacteria grows well in it (*Bacillus Cereus*).
- You must cook rice just before serving or keep it in the fridge.

Food – Labelling

On your label please include

Prepared By Your name

Date Made DD/MM/YY

Frozen Yes/No

Storage Keep Chilled/Frozen/Room temperature (whichever is appropriate)

Ingredients	List the ingredients used particularly any common allergens present. If you used a prepared ingredient, check that label too. (list of allergens attached)
To prepare	Please make sure food is cooked/reheated until piping hot all the way through. Add Oven Temperature and Cooking time

The following few paragraphs offer you some advice on particular matters.

Buffets

Buffets are an issue if food is left unrefrigerated for prolonged periods which gives bacteria a chance to grow – these steps will help

- The first rule is that food should not be laid out on a buffet for more than four hours.
- Prepare the buffet as close to the time of the function as possible and lay the actual buffet out as close to the time of eating as possible.
- If you are making cold meat sandwiches and rolls, keep them refrigerated until the buffet is laid out.
- Meat pies, sausages, chicken portions etc. should be delivered to you as late as possible and should be kept cool or preferably, refrigerated.
- Mayonnaise, coleslaw, rice salads etc. are high-risk items and should be kept cool and covered and preferably, refrigerated.
- Take care with leftovers – throw away any perishable food that has been standing at room temperature for more than four hours and throw away all food scraps.

Ambient Temperature Food

- The key thing to watch is that ambient temperature foods are covered and protected from contamination—either from cooked or raw food (or indeed lots of little fingers!).
- Just like other foods you need to know exactly what is in them to safely advise allergy sufferers (see labelling below). If you don't know what the ingredients are say so!

Vulnerable groups

Take extra care if babies, toddlers, pregnant women, older people and anyone who is ill are attending the function, as food poisoning bacteria can make them very ill. These groups should avoid products made with raw (unpasteurised) milk. It has not been heat treated and may contain organisms harmful to health. Make sure there are alternatives to pâté and soft ripened cheeses – brie, camembert and blue vein types. They may contain listeria which can cause illness for pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone with a low resistance to infection. For these groups, listeria is often severe and can be life threatening.

Big functions... ..big responsibilities

Catering from home for large functions means that you are probably preparing food for more people than usual; cooking foods you don't cook very often; and storing large amounts of food.

- If you're working in someone else's kitchen (like the Church Rooms or St Andrews) it would be best to visit it before hand and make sure that you have all the necessary facilities, for example, hygienic work surfaces, sinks, cutting boards and hot water!

- Make sure you know where the soap, and clean hand towels are kept (or paper disposable towels) – and where the first Aid kit is kept.
- Check fridge freezer and oven sizes and plan which foods to prepare when.
- Who's the Boss? If you will be cooking as part of a team it is important to know who is in charge to help everyone meet the correct standards of food and hygiene.
- How will you cope with the extra people in the kitchen, the extra clutter, more dirty dishes, plates, utensils and messier worktops? Make sure your helpers also understand the need for good hygiene practice.

City and Guilds Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate Online

Cost £14.40 Duration 2-3 hours

<https://www.food-hygiene-certificate.co.uk/food-hygiene-level-2-catering.aspx>

Combe Down PCC will pay for Level 2 Food Safety Training