



Catering from Home

This guidance note is designed to help you if you are planning to cater from home as a commercial business. Home catering is not something to be taken on lightly. If your kitchen does not contain the necessary facilities or if you handle food unsafely, you may cause food poisoning to your customers. If you think that you cannot prepare food at home safely then you shouldn't do it at all. However, for those home caterers who choose simple menus and follow the advice below, catering from home can be a success.

Facilities



- Traditional domestic structural finishes will only be acceptable if they can be kept clean and are maintained in good repair.
- A basin for washing hands must be available provided with hot and cold water, soap (preferably antibacterial liquid soap) and hand drying (preferably disposable paper towel). If your kitchen is used frequently for commercial food preparation and high risk food is prepared it is advisable to provide a wash hand basin in the kitchen. If you have a one and a half bowl sink the half bowl can be used for hand washing.
- A sink for washing work utensils and equipment must be available provided with hot and cold water and detergent. If the same sink is to be used for food washing it must be cleaned and disinfected between uses. The use of a washing up bowl for one of these functions can also help to prevent contamination of food.

Storage

- Keep food for domestic use in a separate fridge and freezer.
- Ensure that you have enough fridge and freezer space to store large quantities of food. Do not overload equipment as cool air will not be able to circulate freely.
- Some domestic fridges do not keep large quantities of food cold enough. You may need a fan assisted commercial fridge.
- Keep perishable food in the fridge at 0-5°C. Measure the fridge temperature by inserting a digital probe thermometer into a block of fruit jelly or lard kept in the fridge. Write the fridge temperature down once a day.
- Keep frozen food at -18°C or colder. Measure the air temperature of the freezer using a digital probe thermometer. Write the freezer temperature down once a week.
- Keep raw food at the bottom of the fridge below ready to eat food.
- Do not store pet food or cleaning materials with food.
- Rotate stock properly and use food within its use by or best before date.



Preparation and Cooking

Preparation

- The key to safe preparation is to protect the food from all possible sources of contamination.
- Clean and disinfect food contact surfaces regularly, especially before beginning commercial food preparation. Use an antibacterial spray and clean or disposable cleaning cloths.
- Do not use your domestic utensils and equipment for commercial food preparation.
- Remove food waste from the kitchen regularly and store in a lidded bin until collection.
- Keep raw and ready to eat food separate at all times and use separate equipment for preparation.
- Keep out of the kitchen any members of the household who are or have been ill with diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Keep pets and children out of the kitchen during commercial food preparation.
- Do not carry out laundry operations during commercial food preparation.
- Remove any domestic every day items from the kitchen that are a potential contamination source.



Cooking

- Defrost food thoroughly before cooking, preferably in the fridge.
- Do **not** wash meat or poultry – this is entirely unnecessary and is likely to spread contamination to other foods.
- Thorough cooking of food is the key to destroying most of the harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. Large pieces of meat or chicken require special care.
- After cooking high risk food such as meat or chicken check that it is cooked to the centre using a digital probe thermometer. The centre temperature should be at least 75°C. Clean the probe before and after each use with antibacterial probe wipes. Write cooked food temperatures down every day.
- Ensure that your domestic oven has the capacity for the amount of food that you will be cooking for the commercial business.
- Cooked food that needs to be chilled should be cooled as quickly as possible, and at least within one and a half hours, before putting it into the fridge.



Personal Hygiene

- Wear a clean tunic or apron.
- Tie long hair back and wear a head covering.
- Do not prepare food if you are suffering from an illness that may be transmitted through the food.
- Keep your hands clean. In particular, wash them before starting food preparation; after handling refuse; after using the toilet, and between handling raw and ready to eat foods.
- Cover exposed wounds with a blue waterproof dressing.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink whilst preparing food.
- Do not wear jewellery or false nails.

Transport and Venue

Transport

- You need to maintain the temperature of the food from your kitchen to the venue at which it will be served. Start by ensuring that the food is properly chilled or heated before dispatch. For short journeys with no stop offs insulated containers should suffice. Otherwise consider a refrigerated vehicle.
- Use a probe thermometer to ensure that the food reaches its destination at the correct temperature ($>63^{\circ}\text{C}$ for hot food and $<8^{\circ}\text{C}$ for cold food).
- Ensure that your vehicle and food containers are clean and maintained in good condition. Do not use the containers for transporting anything other than food.
- Wrap, pack or cover the food to prevent contamination.
- Do not carry animals in the vehicle unless the food is carried in a totally separate compartment.

Venue

Have you checked the facilities at the venue where you will serve the food?

Will the food be eaten immediately on arrival or will it need to be kept hot / cold?



Training

- Ensure that you are properly trained by taking the Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering. This course is available from a number of providers and online.
- If you are interested in the one-day course run by Colchester Borough Council please phone 01206 282581 for further details.

Legal

If there is any degree of regularity to your business you will need to register with the Local Authority. If you cater from home on a much less frequent basis (say less than once a month) you may not be regarded as a “business” and will not therefore need to register. However, you will still be liable for the safety of the food you produce and should therefore follow the advice shown above.

Regular food businesses must have documented food safety procedures and keep appropriate records to demonstrate that they are producing safe food. A free pack to help you do this, called “Safer Food Better Business” is available from www.food.gov.uk/sfbb or by phoning 0845 606 0667

For further advice on catering from home contact Colchester Borough Council’s Food and Safety Team on 01206 282581 or email food.safety@colchester.gov.uk