Good
food
hygiene

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Good food hygiene is essential for you to make or sell food that is safe to eat. So even though there might not be a specific legal requirement behind each tip in this section, it is still very important for you and your staff 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 among your customers

> protect your business's 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.

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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 and disinfect work surfaces, chopping boards and equipment thoroughly before you start preparing food and after you have used them to prepare raw food.

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> Use different equipment (including chopping boards and knives) for raw meat/poultry and ready-to-eat food unless they can be heat disinfected in, for example, a commercial dishwasher.

> Wash your hands before preparing food.

> Wash your hands thoroughly after touching raw food.

> Keep raw and ready-to-eat food apart at all times, including packaging material for ready-to-eat food.

> Store raw food below ready-to-eat food in the fridge. If possible, use separate fridges for raw and ready-to-eat food.

> Provide separate working areas, storage facilities, clothing and staff for the handling of ready-to-eat food.

> Use separate machinery and equipment, such as vacuum packing machines, slicers and mincers, for raw and ready-to-eat food.

> Separate cleaning materials, including cloths, sponges and mops, should be used in areas where ready-to-eat foods are stored, handled and prepared.

> Make sure that your staff know how to avoid cross-contamination.

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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 your staff wash and dry their hands thoroughly before handling food.

> Clean and disinfect 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.

> Use cleaning and disinfection products that are suitable for the job, and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

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> Disinfection products should meet BS EN standards. Check product labels for either of these codes: BS EN 1276 or BS EN 13697.

> Do not let food waste build up.

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Chilling

Chilling food properly helps to stop harmful bacteria from growing. Some food needs to be kept chilled to keep it 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.

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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 steaming hot 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 steaming hot 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.

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Good food hygiene is good for business

If you serve or supply food direct to the public, you may be covered by the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. This means that when your business is inspected, you will be given a hygiene rating from '0' at the bottom to '5' at the top, based on the hygiene standards found at the time.

In Scotland, you will be given a 'Pass' or 'Improvement Required' result as part of a similar scheme called the Food Hygiene Information Scheme.

You will be given a sticker/certificate with your rating or result. You can put these on display to show your customers how good your hygiene standards are. They will also be able to look these up on the Food Standards Agency's website at **food.gov.uk/ratings**

You can find out more about the schemes, in the 'Frequently asked questions' section at **food.gov.uk/ratings**.

What help can I get?

If you would like advice about obeying food hygiene law, get in touch with your local authority.

If you run a small catering business, there are packs available to help you put in place food safety management procedures based on the principles of HACCP. These packs have been produced by the FSA.

> England and Wales

'Safer food, better business', an innovative and practical approach to food safety management, has been developed by the FSA for small businesses. There are also versions for retailers and different cuisines. Visit **food.gov.uk/sfbb** to find out more. An online guide, which is available in different languages, can be viewed online at **food.gov.uk/sfbbtraining**, and other helpful videos are available at **food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/training/hygiene-videos**

> Scotland

The FSA in Scotland has drawn on expertise from the food industry including small businesses, local authorities and the Scottish Food Advisory Committee to develop a HACCP-based system called 'CookSafe'. This is available in English, Chinese, Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi. 'RetailSafe' is also available for retailers. Visit **food.gov.uk** to find out more.

> Northern Ireland

The FSA in Northern Ireland has produced guidance for the catering sector called 'Safe Catering', by working with caterers and local authorities. This guidance, which has been developed and refined over a number of years, is widely accepted by the catering sector in Northern Ireland. Businesses should contact their local authority for information.

Food businesses do not have to use any particular pack or model, but they must make sure they have food safety management procedures that are suitable for their business. Some businesses will already have a suitable system, which they can continue to use.

What help
can I get?

Guidance documents
The FSA has also produced guidance documents on the food
hygiene regulations, which you can read on
food.gov.uk/business-industry/

Guidance for businesses handling raw and ready-to-eat food
can be found at **food.gov.uk/business-
industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide**

FSA publications
There are a number of FSA publications that you might find
helpful. These include:

> **Starting up – Your first steps to running a catering business
food.gov.uk/starting-up**
> **Food law inspections and your business
food.gov.uk/food-law-inspections**

Food industry guides
Guides produced by the food industry also give advice on how
to comply with food hygiene regulations. Using the guides is
voluntary, but they are officially recognised by the Government
and enforcement officers are required to take them into
account when assessing whether businesses comply with the
regulations.

For details visit **food.gov.uk/industryguides**