# Premises Details

**Name of Premises:** .....

**Address of Premises:** .....

.....

**Food business operator:** .....

**Person(s) involved in producing Safe Catering Plan:** .....

# Steps and hazards in your catering operation

**Tick the boxes for the steps that you use in your catering operation.**
**These steps list the microbiological hazards (food poisoning bacteria).**[1]

- **Purchase, Delivery/ Receipt, Collection (pages 2-6)** ☐ I do this
- **Storage (pages 7-11)** ☐ I do this
- **Preparation and Handling (pages 12-15)** ☐ I do this
- **Cold Serve/Display (pages 16-19)** ☐ I do this
- **Defrosting (pages 20-22)** ☐ I do this
- **Cooking (pages 23-29)** ☐ I do this
- **Cooling/Freezing (pages 30-32)** ☐ I do this
- **Reheating (pages 33-36)** ☐ I do this
- **Hot Hold/Display (pages 37-40)** ☐ I do this
- **Transport and Delivery (pages 41-43)** ☐ I do this
- **Other Step(s) (page 44-48)** ☐ I do this

**Tick the boxes for the following hazards that can exist at all stages in your food business.**

- **Physical/Chemical Contamination (pages 49-54)** ☐ I do this
- **Allergens (pages 55-71)** ☐ I do this
- **Acrylamide (pages 72-77)** ☐ I do this

[1] The steps refer to food poisoning bacteria in general – if you would like more information on different types of food poisoning bacteria go to www.fsai.ie

# Advice on Purchase, Delivery/Receipt, Collection

## Ordering food

Go through your menu and estimate how much of each ingredient you will need. Plan ahead to make sure you have the right amount of and order carefully. Follow the 'first in, first out' system of stock rotation so that the older stock is used first.

## Suppliers

**The starting point for making food safely is to be confident about the safety of your raw ingredients and any ready-made products you buy in. To make sure that the food you are buying has been handled safely you should choose your suppliers carefully.**

It is important to have suppliers that you can trust to handle food safely, as well as delivering on time. It is a good idea to have a written agreement with your supplier about your delivery requirements.

To make sure that you use reputable suppliers it is recommended that you ask the following questions:

- Is the business registered with the relevant competent authority, e.g. Health Service Executive, Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, etc?
- Does the supplier have a food safety management system?
- Do they have any certification or quality assurance?
- Do they store, transport and pack their goods in a hygienic way?

You could also:

- Ask other businesses for recommendations.
- Contact a trade association for advice.

It is a good idea to write down details of all your suppliers (use Suppliers List form on page 6 in this section).

## Supplier traceability

All food businesses must have an effective supplier traceability system, i.e. be able to trace food one step back to the supplier. For more information, see section 4, page 2 on Traceability.

If you have problems with your supplier, you can do the following things:
1. Contact the supplier/contractor by phone.
2. Write a formal letter of complaint.
3. Change supplier/contractor.

## Delivery/receipt

You should carry out regular checks on deliveries. For large deliveries randomly check a few of the items. Check to make sure that food:

- Has been delivered while the premises is open.
- Is adequately separated to avoid cross-contamination.
- Is within its 'use-by' or 'best-before' date.
- Has been kept at the correct temperature.
- Has not gone off.
- Is clean and not damaged, e.g. dispose of any punctured vacuum packs, swollen packs or badly dented cans and check that tops are secure on bottles and jars and seals are unbroken.

**If you do not think that the food a supplier delivers has been handled safely (for example, if you think it has not been kept cold enough) reject the delivery, contact your supplier immediately and record the details (record on SC1, section 6 page 2).**

Deliveries should be unloaded in a clean, separate area. Delivery personnel should be discouraged from entering the kitchen. Outer packaging could have touched dirty floors etc. when it was stored/ transported prior to delivery to your premises. If appropriate, take off outer packaging and dispose of it before bringing food into the kitchen or storeroom. This helps to prevent dirty outer packaging or leaks from deliveries from spreading bacteria. Make sure you make a note of the name of the food, the ingredients, the 'use by' or 'best before' date, and the batch code, if this is not recorded on the inner packaging.

Put chilled food in the fridge and frozen food in the freezer as soon as it is delivered. If the temperature of chilled food is allowed to rise above 5°C, or if frozen food is allowed to thaw, food poisoning bacteria could grow. It is important to make sure ready-to-eat foods that will not be cooked or reheated before serving are monitored for delivery at the correct temperature. Ready-to-eat foods include cooked meats and poultry, smoked/cured fish, oysters, dairy products, desserts, prepared salads, sandwiches, soft cheeses and pre-cooked dishes such as quiche & cooked chicken.

When you take the temperature of raw meat/poultry/fish, it is recommended that a separate designated temperature probe is made available for this purpose. This is to avoid the risk of contamination of ready-to-eat foods by the probe. It is not advisable to insert the probe into raw meat as this could transfer food poisoning bacteria from the surface of the meat into the centre. It is recommended that a surface temperature is taken.

Vacuum packed food should not be pierced with a temperature probe. A between pack temperature could be taken.

## Collection

If you buy food from a cash and carry or retailer, make sure that the vehicle you use to transport them is clean and that you bring chilled and frozen foods back as soon as possible and put straight into a fridge or freezer. It is best to use insulated cool bags/boxes with ice-packs.

Care should be taken to keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate. This is necessary to avoid cross-contamination. If collecting food from a local retailer you need to keep records of what you bought and where. Record on SC1, section 6, page 2.

# Suppliers List

| Business Name | Address | Tel No | Foods Supplied |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

# Advice on Storage

## Refrigeration

Certain foods need to be kept chilled to keep food poisoning bacteria from growing e.g.

- Food with a 'use by' date.
- Food that says 'keep refrigerated' on the label.
- Foods where the manufacturer's instructions say 'once opened keep refrigerated'.
- Food you have prepared and that require refrigerated storage e.g. quiche, pesto. These can be stored for up to two days only and day of production is Day 0. Therefore, if food is produced on Monday (Day 0), Tuesday is Day 1, and Wednesday is Day 2. Any food not served on Day 2 must be disposed of.
- Ready-to-eat food such as cooked meats, salads and desserts.

Make sure that you do not use food after its 'use-by' date as it is not safe to eat and must be disposed of.

Follow manufacturer's instructions on how to store food, as these are designed to keep it safe.

## Advice on storage

The 'use-by'/'best-before' date on a product label only applies to the unopened product. Once opened, e.g. vacuum packed, tins, the product shelf-life is reduced. A new 'use-by' date must be given to the product. In some cases, this may be provided by the manufacturer. Use stickers or another safe method of labelling to record the new 'use-by' date. Do not store food in open tins. Transfer contents to clean covered containers and date code.

It is important to use equipment properly to make sure food is kept cold enough. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use fridges and chilled display equipment. Fridges must not be over-stocked to allow cold air to circulate.

**Remember that chilled food must be kept at 5°C or below. To achieve this, it is recommended that fridges and chilled display equipment should be set below 5°C, e.g. 3°C.**

## Equipment breakdown

If your fridge or display equipment breaks down, move the food to another fridge or risk assess, or dispose of the food.

If you have frequent problems with your chilling equipment, consider whether it is suitable for your business. Generally, commercial equipment will be more suitable for catering.

## Frozen storage

Frozen food will keep for longer periods as bacteria and/or yeasts will not grow at very cold temperatures. Freezing, however, does not kill bacteria. Freezers should operate at a temperature of at least -18°C.

Frozen food should be placed in the freezer as soon as it is delivered. Raw foods and ready-to-eat foods should be well covered and separated within the freezer to avoid cross-contamination. Date codes should be checked regularly and stock rotated. Fresh food which you freeze on your premises should be date-coded by you to make sure that it is used within a satisfactory time period. Storage times will vary depending on the type of food and on your particular freezer.

Freezers should be defrosted and cleaned on a regular basis and as recommended by the manufacturer.

If frozen food starts to defrost, food poisoning bacteria could grow. If you find that your freezer is not working properly, you should do the following things:

1. **Food that is still frozen** (i.e. hard and icy) should be moved to an alternative freezer. If there is not an alternative freezer, defrost food (see Defrosting step in this section, pages 20-22).
2. **Food that has begun to defrost** (i.e. starting to get soft and/or with liquid coming out of it) should be moved to a suitable place to continue defrosting for immediate use (see Defrosting step in this section, pages 20-22).
3. **Fully defrosted food** (i.e. soft) should be cooked, if appropriate (e.g. raw meat, poultry and fish), until it is piping hot all the way through. After cooking, use the food immediately, or chill or freeze it safely straight away. If this is not possible, dispose of it.
4. **Food that has to be kept frozen** e.g. ice cream cannot be re-frozen once it has started to defrost. You will have to use it immediately or dispose of it.

## Room temperature storage

Dry foods, such as flour and rice, should be stored in rooms which are clean, dry and well ventilated. Food should be kept off the floor and placed in covered containers. When transferring food from its original packaging into containers, you should retain the ingredients list to ensure awareness of ingredients which may cause an allergy. The date code should also be marked on the container.

**Swollen or 'blown' packs can be a sign that bacteria and/or yeasts have grown in food or drinks. Dispose of any punctured vacuum packs, swollen packs or badly dented cans and check that tops are secure on bottles and jars and seals are unbroken.**

Fruit and vegetables should be kept in a cool room and stored off the floor. They should be stored away from food which is cooked or ready-to-eat to avoid contamination from soil and bacteria.

## Stock control

Effective stock control is an important part of managing food safety.

Plan ahead to make sure you have the right amount of stock and order carefully. Not having too much stock is best for food safety. In order to control your stock consider the following:

- Plan the stock you need for each shift.
- Make sure staff know the stock requirements for each shift.
- Use a supplier who understands your business needs and supplies stock on time.
- Discuss your needs with your supplier.
- Do a stock check before placing an order.
- Review your menu regularly and how it affects your need for stock.

**Carry out regular stock checks and dispose of any food that has passed its 'use by' date.**

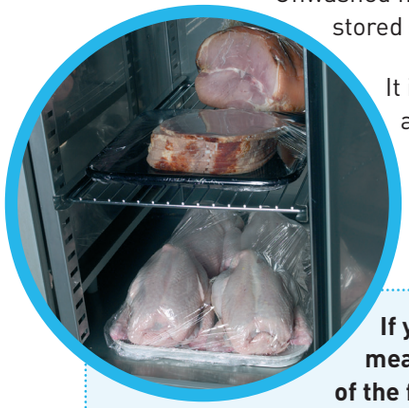
To keep track of when food should be used or disposed of follow this advice:


- For dishes you have prepared or cooked, you should use stickers, or another safe method of labelling the date of production and/or 'use-by' date.
- Follow the 'first in, first out' system of stock rotation, so that older stock is used first. This helps to avoid waste.
- Train your staff in stock control and make sure they know in what order to use foods.
- Check regularly that stock control is being carried out effectively.

## Cross-contamination

Separating raw and ready-to-eat foods is essential to prevent food poisoning bacteria from spreading. Where possible, separate fridges/freezers should be used for storing raw and cooked food. If they are in the same fridge/freezer, store raw meat/poultry/fish below or segregated from ready-to-eat foods. This helps to prevent food poisoning bacteria spreading from raw foods to ready-to-eat foods e.g. by blood dripping.

Unwashed fruit and vegetables can be a source of food poisoning bacteria and must also be stored separately from ready-to-eat foods.



It is important to keep food covered to help protect it from food poisoning bacteria and to protect it from physical contamination. This is especially important for ready-to-eat food. Suggested food coverings include kitchen foil, cling film, plastic boxes with lids or freezer bags. All packaging must be food grade.

**If you think that ready-to-eat food has not been kept separate from raw meat/poultry/fish, eggs or unprepared fruit/vegetables during storage dispose of the food.**

# Advice on Preparation and Handling

## Preventing cross-contamination

To protect ready-to-eat food from food poisoning bacteria:

- Keep ready-to-eat foods separate from raw meat/poultry/fish, eggs and unprepared fruit/vegetables. This is to prevent food poisoning bacteria getting on to the ready-to-eat foods. Prepare raw meat/poultry/fish, eggs and unprepared fruit/vegetables in different areas from other foods. If this is not possible, separate by preparing them at different times and clean and disinfect thoroughly between tasks.
- Never use the same chopping board or knives for preparing raw meat/poultry/fish, unprepared fruit/vegetables and for ready-to-eat food (unless they have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in between). This helps to prevent food poisoning bacteria spreading from one food to another. This is especially important for ready-to-eat foods because they will not be cooked before serving.
- Staff should always wash their hands thoroughly before preparing food. If wearing gloves, the correct procedures should be followed (refer to advice on Personal Hygiene in section 4 pages 20-22).

## Complex equipment

**Complex equipment is the term given to items of equipment that can be very difficult to clean. This may be because it is hard to access all parts of the equipment or because it is made up of a number of small parts and surfaces may not be smooth or easy to clean. These include vacuum packing machines, meat slicers and mincing machines. Complex equipment used for ready-to-eat food must never be used for raw food. This is to prevent food poisoning bacteria getting onto ready-to-eat foods. You should review the equipment that you use and identify where you might need separate equipment for use with raw and ready-to-eat foods.**

## What to do if things go wrong

- **If you think that ready-to-eat food has not been kept separate from raw meat/poultry/fish, eggs and unprepared fruit/vegetables, dispose of it.**
- **If equipment/surfaces/utensils have been touched by raw meat/poultry, eggs and unprepared fruit/vegetables wash, disinfect and dry them to prevent food poisoning bacteria from spreading.**

## Slicing cooked meat

If you slice cooked meat:

- Avoid handling the meat as much as possible - it is a good idea to use clean tongs or slice meat straight onto a plate, as hands can easily spread food poisoning bacteria onto the food.

## Preparing raw poultry

**Do not wash raw poultry.** Raw poultry may be contaminated with food poisoning bacteria, therefore do not wash as this can spread bacteria around the kitchen.

## Preparing vegetables and salad ingredients

The dirt on vegetables and salad ingredients can contain food poisoning bacteria. When preparing vegetables and salad ingredients:

- Peel, trim, or remove the outer parts, as appropriate.
- Wash them thoroughly in clean drinking water (ideally in a separate sink).
- If you have prepared vegetables that have dirt or soil on the outside, clean and disinfect chopping boards and work surfaces before preparing other foods.

## Boiling imported frozen berries

As a result of outbreaks of norovirus and hepatitis A virus in imported frozen berries across Europe in recent years, the FSAI recommends boiling imported frozen berries for one minute before consumption. This is particularly important when serving these foods to vulnerable people, such as nursing home residents.

## Foods requiring special care during handling

Foods such as oysters, beef carpaccio and sushi, which are eaten raw, must be handled as carefully as other ready-to-eat foods. These foods however still present a contamination risk to other ready-to-eat foods.

These foods must be handled by someone with specialist knowledge.

These foods must be stored and handled separately from both conventional raw foods such as raw meat and other ready-to-eat foods.

**The service of raw and partially cooked foods presents a hazard which cannot be fully controlled.**

# Advice on Cold Serve/Display

## Refrigeration

Certain foods need to be kept chilled to keep them safe, e.g.

- Food with a 'use-by' date.
- Food that says 'keep refrigerated' on the label.
- Food where the manufacturer's instructions say 'once opened keep refrigerated'.
- Food you have cooked and will not serve immediately.
- Ready-to-eat foods such as salads and desserts.

If these types of food are not kept cold enough food poisoning bacteria could grow.

It is important to use equipment properly to make sure food is kept cold enough. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use fridges and chilled display equipment.

**Remember that chilled food must be kept at 0ºC to 5ºC. To achieve this, it is recommended that fridges and chilled display equipment should be set below 5ºC, e.g. 3ºC.**

Some equipment will have a digital or display dial to show what temperature it is set at. You can use this to check the temperature of your equipment. If you do this, you should check regularly that the temperature shown on the display/dial is accurate using a temperature probe.

You should check the temperature of the food in your chilled display equipment at least once per day, remembering the following points:

- Pre-cool display unit before you put cold food in it.
- Only display as much food as you think you will need.
- Display food for the shortest time possible.
- Do not mix old and new stock.
- Make sure food on display is used within its 'use-by' date.

You could also:

- Use a dummy portion for display (which will not be eaten).
- Use photographs to show customers what the food looks like.

## Equipment breakdown

If your fridge or display equipment breaks down, move the food to another fridge or risk assess or dispose of the food.

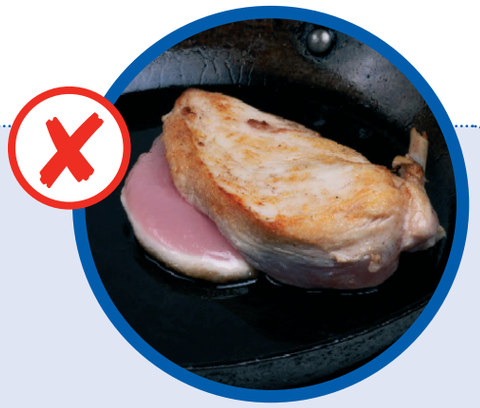
If you have frequent problems with your chilling equipment, consider whether it is suitable for your business. Generally, commercial equipment will be more suitable for catering.

## Avoiding contamination

It is important to avoid contamination when cold food is on display for sale or service. Remember the following points:

- Introduce staff practices which will eliminate hand contact with ready -to-eat displayed foods (e.g. use of tongs). If using gloves, make sure staff refer to advice on Personal Hygiene in section 4 pages 20-22.
- Protect displayed foods from contamination by customers. The use of sneeze guards is recommended. If customers are required to serve themselves, make sure the appropriate utensils are available e.g. long handled serving spoons etc. These utensils should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. The self service activity should be regularly monitored by your staff.
- Repair or replace any utensils which are damaged, deeply scored or have loose parts. Replace any cracked or chipped crockery.
- Remove food from display fridges while cleaning and disinfecting the inside of such units.

# Advice on Defrosting



**Food poisoning bacteria can grow in food that is not defrosted properly. It must be thoroughly defrosted before cooking (unless the manufacturer's instructions tell you to cook from frozen). If food is still frozen or partially frozen, it will take longer to cook. The outside of the food could be cooked, but the centre might not be, which means it could contain food poisoning bacteria.**

**Keep meat/poultry/fish separate from other food and suitably contained when it is defrosting, to prevent cross-contamination. Once food has been defrosted it should not be re-frozen. Make sure defrosted food, if not cooked immediately, is date coded, refrigerated and used as soon as possible.**

## Options for defrosting food

1. Putting food in the fridge will keep it at a safe temperature while it is defrosting. Ideally, plan ahead to leave enough time and space to defrost small amounts of food in the fridge.
2. A fast way to defrost food is in the microwave on the 'defrost' setting. This method is not recommended for foods which will not be cooked immediately, as the temperature of the outside of the food may rise allowing food poisoning bacteria to grow.
3. For bought in ready-to-eat foods, e.g. cheesecake, follow the manufacturer's defrosting instructions.

## Checking

When you think food has defrosted, it is important to check that it has defrosted fully. The outside may look defrosted but the inside could still be frozen.

1. Check for ice in the food using your hand, a skewer or a temperature probe (sanitise the probe before and after use).

2. With poultry, check the joints are flexible.

### If food has not fully defrosted:

- Continue to defrost the food until there is no ice left. Test again before cooking or reheating.

### If you are having problems in defrosting food consider the following:

- Change your defrosting method and make it safer, e.g. defrost smaller amounts.
- Make sure you allow enough time to defrost.
- Train staff again on safe methods of defrosting.
- Improve staff supervision.
- If you defrost lots of food in your business you may wish to consider creating extra fridge space or using a special defrosting cabinet.

# Advice on Cooking

**Cooking is a critical step to ensure that any food poisoning bacteria that may be present in food are completely killed and the food is safe to eat. It is essential that cooking is carried out properly.**

## Safe cooking tips

- Preheat equipment such as ovens and grills before cooking. If you use equipment before it has preheated, food will take longer to cook. This means that recommended cooking times in recipes or manufacturer's instructions might not be long enough.
- Do not let raw food touch or drip onto cooked food, e.g. when adding food to the grill/barbecue. Raw food can carry food poisoning bacteria, which could spread onto cooked food and stop it being safe.

## Checking that foods are properly cooked

Check that combination dishes are piping hot (steaming) in the centre. If you are cooking a large dish or batch, check in several places. (Remember large dishes or batches require a longer cooking time).

Check that liquid dishes bubble rapidly when you stir them. This is to make sure the food is hot enough to cook it thoroughly and kill food poisoning bacteria. Stir liquid dishes frequently. This is to help make sure the food is the same temperature all the way through, with no cold spots.

Check that all the outside surfaces of whole cuts and whole joints of meat are fully cooked. This will kill food poisoning bacteria which are only on the outside of the meat. Pork and rolled joints should not be served rare.

Cut into the centre of fish, or by the bone if there is one, to check that the colour and texture has changed. Whole pieces of fish (e.g. tuna steaks) can be served 'rare' as long as they have been fully seared on the outside.

Turn meat and poultry during cooking as this helps it cook more evenly.

# Foods that need Extra Care

Remember that raw meat and poultry are often the main source of bacteria in the kitchen. Follow the advice in the cooking step on how to cook these foods. You should also take care with the following foods.

## Eggs

Cook eggs and foods containing eggs thoroughly until they are piping hot. Eggs can contain food poisoning bacteria (Salmonella). If you cook them thoroughly this kills any bacteria. Check that the egg is cooked until the white is solid. (The safest option is to cook the egg until the yolk is also solid).

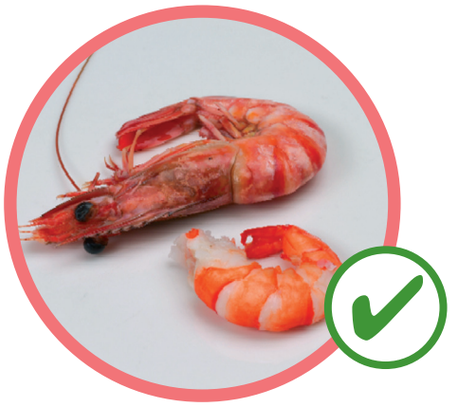
The FSAI recommends the use of pasteurised egg in any food that will not be cooked, or lightly cooked e.g. mayonnaise and mousse. Eggs produced under the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme are the next safest source.

## Shellfish

**Make sure you buy shellfish from a reputable supplier. If you do not use a reputable supplier, you cannot be confident that shellfish have been caught and handled safely.**

Crabs, crayfish and lobster should be prepared by someone with specialist knowledge. Some parts of these shellfish cannot be eaten and some are poisonous, so it is important to know how to remove these parts safely.

Shellfish such as prawns and scallops will change in colour and texture when they are cooked. For example, prawns turn from blue-grey to pink and scallops become milky white and firm.



If you use ready-cooked (pink) prawns, serve them cold or reheat them until they are piping hot all the way through.

Before cooking mussels and clams, dispose of any with open or damaged shells. If the shell is damaged or open **before** cooking, the shellfish might not be safe to eat.

To check that a mussel or clam is cooked, make sure the shell is open **after** cooking and that the mussel or clam has shrunk inside the shell. If the shell has not opened during cooking, dispose of it.

## Rice

**It is essential to handle rice safely to make sure it is safe to eat. Uncooked rice can contain spores of Bacillus cereus, bacteria that can cause food poisoning.**

**When the rice is cooked, make sure you keep it hot until serving or chill it down as quickly as possible, ideally within 1 hour, and then keep it in the fridge.**

When the rice is cooked, the spores can survive. Then, if the cooked rice is left standing at room temperature, the bacteria could start growing again from the spores. These bacteria will multiply and may produce toxins (poisons) that cause vomiting or diarrhoea. Reheating the rice won't get rid of these toxins.

You can cool rice down more quickly by dividing it into smaller portions, spreading it out on a clean tray, or running it under cold water (make sure the water is clean and of drinking quality).

## Pulses

Follow the instructions on the packaging on how to soak and cook dried pulses, such as red kidney beans.

**Pulses can contain natural toxins that could make people ill unless they are destroyed by the proper method of soaking and cooking.**

Tinned pulses will have been soaked and cooked already.

## Food cooked to order

Foods that may be cooked to order (customer's preference) are fish and shellfish, whole joints, birds (game and duck), cuts/portions of lamb, beef or venison.

When cooking food to order, you should make sure the:

- Chef is fully trained and experienced
- Food is seared/cooked on the outside
- Food is served as soon as possible (within 30 minutes)
- Products used are purchased from selected suppliers

# Equipment Time/Temperature Combinations

Use this form to specify time/temperature combinations to ensure food is cooked (to 75°C or hotter) or reheated (to 70°C or hotter). Cross-check regularly using a calibrated temperature probe and record food temperatures in SC3, Section 6 page 4.

| **Food** (Specify Whether Raw Or Cooked) | **Portion Size** | **Equipment** (E.g. Oven/microwave) | **Equipment Setting** (E.g. Oven Temperature/ Microwave Power Level) | **Cooking Or Reheating Time** | **Temp. Reached** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

# Advice on Cooling/Freezing

## Cooling hot foods

Food poisoning bacteria can grow in food that is left to cool slowly.

**Cooked food should be cooled down as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge/freezer within 2 hours. For larger joints and whole birds, a longer initial cooling period may be required. Large whole joints (i.e. greater than 2.5kg) must be cooled to less than or equal to 5ºC within 6 hours of finishing cooking.***

Do not put foods that are not sufficiently cooled into the fridge as this may raise the temperature of the fridge and cause condensation.

It is important to protect food from dirt and bacteria at all times while cooling whatever method you use.

**If food has not been cooled down safely, dispose of it.**

### Options for cooling down food

(You can use one or more of these)

1. Use a blast chiller to cool down food especially if you cool lots of food in your business. A blast chiller is specially designed to cool hot foods quickly and safely.
2. Divide food into smaller portions. Smaller amounts of food cool down more quickly.
3. Place containers of hot food in cold water/ice bath. The cold water/ice bath makes the contents of the containers cool more quickly.

4. While food is cooling down, stir regularly with a clean utensil. Stirring helps food cool more evenly.
5. Move hot food to a colder area (e.g. a larder). Food will cool more quickly in a colder place.
6. Some ovens have a 'cool' setting, which can help to cool down food by increasing the airflow around it. (The oven should be cool first).

### Comparing different cooling options

If you would like to compare different cooling options, try them out with the same food. You will only need to do this once. When you have just cooked the food, use a temperature probe to test its temperature. Then test the temperature again at regular intervals to find out how fast the food is being cooled down. Remember to sanitise the probe before and after use. Repeat the process with different cooling options to find out which is most effective.

*If you are operating a cook chill system or manufacturing heat-chill foods refer to FSAI Guidance Notes 15 and 20

### If you are having problems in cooling food consider the following:

- Review your cooling methods and change method of cooling if necessary.
- Avoid cooking large quantities of food in advance. Large quantities of food are more difficult to cool down quickly, especially solid food.
- If you cool large quantities of hot food in your business you may wish to consider using a blast chiller.
- Make sure you always allow enough time and make portions small enough.
- Train staff again.
- Improve staff supervision.

## Cooling rice

It is essential to handle rice safely to make sure it is safe to eat. Uncooked rice can contain spores of Bacillus cereus, bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

When the rice is cooked, make sure you keep it hot (i.e. at or above 63ºC) until serving or cool it down as quickly as possible, ideally within 1 hour, and then keep it in the fridge. When the rice is cooked the spores can survive. Then, if the rice is left standing at room temperature, the bacteria could start growing again from the spores. These bacteria will multiply and may produce toxins (poisons) that cause vomiting or diarrhoea. **Reheating the rice won't get rid of these toxins.**

You can cool rice down more quickly by dividing it into smaller portions, spreading it out on clean tray, or running it under cold water (make sure the water is clean and of drinking quality).

## Freezing

If you are freezing fresh food, freeze it as soon as it has been prepared. Freeze hot food as soon as it has been properly cooled down. The longer you wait before freezing food, the greater the chance of food poisoning bacteria growing.

Divide food into smaller portions and put it in containers or freezer bags before freezing. Smaller portions will freeze (and defrost) quicker. The centre of larger portions takes longer to freeze, allowing food poisoning bacteria to grow. Using containers or freezer bags prevents cross-contamination.

For dishes you have prepared or cooked for freezing, you should use stickers, or another method of marking, to record the date of freezing and/or 'best-before' date. This will help you with stock rotation.

As a general rule and to maintain the quality, food should not be stored in a freezer for longer then 6 months (provided that your freezer is suitable for storing foods for this length of time. See star ratings below).

* Runs at –6°C and should only store food for up to one week
** Runs at –12°C and should only store food for up to one month
*** Runs at –18°C and should only store food for up to 3 months
**** Runs at –18°C and is suitable for long term storage (3 to 6 months)

# Advice on Reheating

**Reheating means cooking again, not just warming up. Always reheat food until it is piping hot (i.e. 70ºC or hotter) all the way through (you should only do this once).**

Make sure you use equipment that reheats food effectively and follow the equipment manufacturer's instructions. If equipment is not suitable for reheating, or is not used properly, the food might not get hot enough to kill bacteria.

Establish the appropriate equipment setting and time combination for individual products to ensure the food reaches a core temperature of 70°C (use equipment time/temperature combinations form on page 29 of this section).

Preheat equipment such as ovens and grills before reheating. Food will take longer to reheat if you use equipment before it has preheated. This means that recommended reheating times in recipes or manufacturer's instructions might not be long enough.

If you are reheating food in a microwave, follow the product manufacturer's instructions, including advice on standing and stirring. The manufacturer has tested their instructions to make sure that products will be properly reheated. When food is microwaved, it can be very hot at the edges and still be cold in the centre - stirring helps to prevent this.

Serve reheated food immediately, unless it is going straight into hot holding. If food is not served immediately, the temperature will drop and food poisoning bacteria could grow.

## Check that reheated food is piping hot (steaming) all the way through.

Liquids should be bubbling and steaming

Combination dishes should be piping hot (steaming) in the centre

## If you are having problems reheating food consider the following:

- Check your equipment is working correctly.
- Review your reheating method – you may need to increase the time and/or temperature, use different equipment or change the size of portions.
- Train staff again on this safe method.
- Improve staff supervision.

# Advice on Hot Holding

Food in hot holding must be kept at or above 63°C.

When you display hot food, e.g. on a buffet, you should use suitable hot holding equipment to keep it at or above 63°C. It is difficult to hold food at a consistent, safe temperature without suitable equipment.

Preheat hot holding equipment before you put any food in it. Putting food into cold equipment means it might not be kept hot enough to stop food poisoning bacteria growing.

**Food must be cooked/reheated thoroughly and piping hot before hot holding begins. Hot holding equipment is for hot holding only. It should not be used to cook or reheat food.**

If you are concerned about the effect of hot holding on the quality of food, reduce the length of time you keep food hot - not the temperature. Food poisoning bacteria could grow in food if it is not kept hot enough.

**Manage stock during hot holding to ensure that it is used in a 'first in, first out' basis.**

If a dish is not hot enough at any point during hot holding, either:

- Reheat it until it is piping hot (i.e. 70°C or hotter) and put back into hot holding ensuring that the temperature remains at or above 63°C or
- Cool down the food safely to 5°C or below and reheat it later before serving

If you cannot do either of these things, dispose of the food.
**Remember that you should only reheat food once.**

## If you are having problems hot holding food consider the following:

- Check your equipment is working correctly.
- Review your method of hot holding. Try using a higher temperature setting or smaller quantities of food.
- Train staff again.
- Improve staff supervision.

# Advice on Transport and Distribution of Foods

If you supply hot, chilled or frozen food to outside catering operations or other retail/catering businesses care should be taken to prevent food being contaminated during distribution and delivery to customers. If you are supplying other food businesses you need to speak to your environmental health officer for advice and guidance as other legislation may apply to you.

Ready-to-eat food supplied from a catering business is at risk from contamination with food poisoning bacteria from raw food if both are transported together. It is essential that both raw and ready-to-eat foods are fully wrapped and kept separate during transportation.

Separate, clean, food grade containers should be used for food in transit. Delivery drivers handling both raw and ready-to-eat foods should exercise good personal hygiene and wash their hands regularly.

## What to do if things go wrong

**If you think that ready-to-eat food has been contaminated by raw food it should be disposed of.**

## Temperature control

- To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria chilled food should be transported and distributed at a temperature of 5°C or below; hot ready-to-eat food at a temperature at or above 63°C and frozen food at a temperature of less than or equal to -18°C .
- The transport vehicle or containers must be capable of maintaining the foodstuffs at the appropriate temperatures and allow the temperatures to be monitored.
- It is important that the temperature of the food is measured using designated calibrated temperature probes.

## Customer traceability for supplying other retail/catering businesses

All food businesses must have an effective customer traceability system, i.e. be able to trace food one step forward to the customer. For more information see section 4, page 3 on Traceability.

# Advice on Other Steps

If any steps in your catering operation are different from those listed on page 1 of this section (Safe Catering Plan), then you should complete a copy of the blank sheet on page 44 for each of these steps.
To complete this sheet for other steps you must do the following:

- Identify the hazards i.e. **What can go wrong here?**
- Identify how to control the hazard i.e. **What can I do about it?**
- Decide how you will monitor (and verify) your hazard controls i.e. **How can I check?**
- Decide what corrective action is needed i.e. **What if it's not right?**

There are some steps that are becoming more common in catering operations, e.g. sushi and sous vide where all the hazards are not controlled in the steps listed on page 1. For these types of steps, you will need to complete the table in the 'Other Steps' tab on page 44. Check www.fsai.ie for additional information on steps like sushi, sous vide etc.

It is important that you identify all of the hazards associated with your 'Other Steps' so that you can control these hazards and produce safe food for your customers. For example, if you produce sushi in your premises the hazards and controls you would need to consider are outlined below.

## Other step(s) example – sushi

The following are very specific hazards and controls related to sushi. Remember you must also follow the controls for ready-to-eat foods outlined in previous sections of the Safe Catering Plan.

### Supplier control

Buy good quality ingredients (including seaweed) from reputable suppliers. Fish for sushi should be of the highest quality and the supplier should be made aware that the fish is to be eaten raw.

### Presence of parasites

Controls must be put in place to make sure the raw fish used for ready-to-eat dishes including sushi, sashimi, ceviche, poke, fish carpaccio, do not contain parasites as follows:

- Check documentation that the fish has been previously frozen (so that it reaches at least -20°C for not less than 24 hours or -35°C for not less than 15 hours), or there is a declaration that the fish has been caught in a fishing area that parasites are not a health hazard or exclusively reared in an environment that is free from parasites.

- If there is no documentation/declaration, a freezing step must be completed in-house by the FBO, provided they have suitable equipment. To kill any parasites present, raw fish must be frozen so that it reaches at least -20°C for not less than 24 hours or -35°C for not less than 15 hours. The timing of the period of freezing starts once the fish has reached the target temperature, not as soon as it was been placed in a freezer i.e. once the temperature of the fish reaches -20°C, the 24-hour timer is started. You should not attempt to freeze the fish to kill parasites unless you have a freezer capable of achieving the time/temperature requirements. You must be able to demonstrate this, record on the 'Parasite Kill Table' (page 47). For more details on 'Safe production of sushi', see: www.fsai.ie.

## Production of histamine

To control histamine production strict time and temperature control is needed. Fish used for sushi must be stored refrigerated under 5°C or frozen. Frozen fish for sushi needs to be defrosted in the fridge under 5°C. Fish types associated with high levels of histamine include fish species of the families: Scombridae (mackerel, tuna, bonito), Clupeidae (herring, sardine), Engraulidae (anchovy), Coryfenidae (mahi mahi), Pomatomidae (bluefish), Scombresosidae (saury).

## Cross-contamination of ready-to-eat food with food poisoning bacteria

- Raw fish to be used in sushi needs to be stored separate from other raw food e.g. raw fish/raw meat. It should be stored at the bottom of the ready-to-eat storage section below other ready-to-eat food.
- Controls need to be put in place to ensure that food poisoning bacteria that could be present on the raw fish used for sushi do not contaminate other ready-to-eat foods.
- Controls need to be put in place to ensure that the sushi is not contaminated with food poisoning bacteria that may be on hands, equipment, utensils, clothes and surfaces.

## Preparation of sushi rice

Controls need to be in place for the preparation of sushi rice either by cooling and refrigerating the rice as quickly as possible, or by acidifying the rice sufficiently to prevent food poisoning bacteria from growing.

- **Cooking/cooling and refrigeration of sushi rice**
  If the chosen control when preparing sushi rice is to cool and refrigerate, the controls regarding cooling and shelf life (storage) set out in the relevant Safe Catering Pack sections (see pages 30-32 for Cooling, pages 7-11 for Storage) need to be followed. All sushi for refrigerated display must be prepared using this method.

- **Acidification of rice**
  If the chosen control when preparing sushi rice is acidification, then the following needs to be considered:
  – Acidifying the rice by adding vinegar will inhibit bacterial growth in the rice but this needs to be controlled and monitored to ensure it is sufficient to prevent food poisoning bacteria growing.
  – The vinegar solution should be standardised to achieve a pH of 4.6 or less in the sushi rice in accordance with a documented recipe. Rice should be acidified as soon as it is cooked. A calibrated pH meter must be used when checking the pH of the rice, to ensure it has reached the pH limit. For more details on 'Safe production of sushi' see www.fsai.ie.
  – Proper acidification of sushi rice allows it to be kept without cooling at room temperature safely for up to a maximum of 4 hours from the time the sushi rice is cooked. The rice should be disposed of after this time.
  – Use the 'Acidification Monitoring Table' (page 48) to record.

## Storage of prepared sushi e.g. sushi rolls

Sushi needs to be kept refrigerated to keep food poisoning bacteria from growing. It should be stored for no longer than two days. Only defrost the fish in small amounts and use a stock control system based on the 'first in, first out' principle. For quality purposes, it is good practice to assemble and serve sushi immediately.

## Allergens

Fish is one of the EU listed allergens (see section 3 page 65) and therefore, fish and any other relevant allergens must be identified in any of the dishes they are used in and the allergen controls in the Allergens Section (pages 55-71) must be followed.

# Parasite Kill Table

The legal requirement for fish that is to be eaten raw is that it has been frozen at -20°C for a minimum of 24 hours. This time is from when the fish reaches a temperature of -20C and not the time it is first placed in the freezer. You must allow additional time for the fish to cool down to -20°C before starting the timer.

You must be able to demonstrate how quickly all parts of the fish take to reach a temperature of 20°C in a freezer maintained at -20°C. If you cannot do this, use a default time of 48 hours (24 hours to reach -20°C; 24 hours to kill parasites).

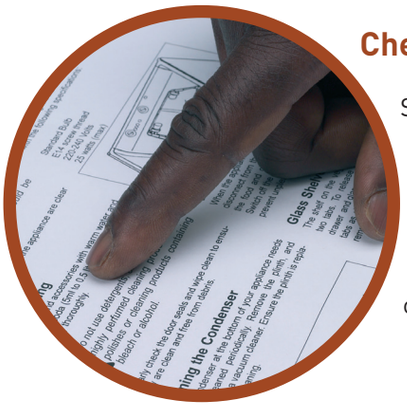
| **Batch No.** | **Supplier** | **Temperature of freezer (°C)** | **Date placed in freezer** | **Time placed in freezer** | **Date out of freezer** | **Time out of the freezer** | **Signed** (out of freezer) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

# Acidification Monitoring Table

| **Date acidified** | **Time acidified** | **pH** (4.6 or below) | **Use by** (max 4hrs from time acidified) | **Signed** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

# Advice on Physical/Chemical Contamination

It is very important to prevent objects and chemicals getting into food to prevent injury to your customers. There are many types of potential physical and chemical contaminants within your business such as hair, jewellery, cleaning chemicals, pest droppings, glass, nuts, bolts, etc. **Where possible, keep food covered to stop things falling into it.**



## Chemicals

Store cleaning chemicals separately from food to prevent them getting into food as they may be poisonous to people. Make sure all chemicals are clearly labelled. Follow the manufacturers instructions carefully on how to use and store cleaning chemicals. Make sure that all cleaning chemicals you use are suitable for surfaces in contact with food.

## Pests

Make sure you control pests effectively (refer to advice on Pest Control, section 4 pages 13-16). Make sure that any chemicals you use to control pests are used and stored in the correct way and are clearly labelled.

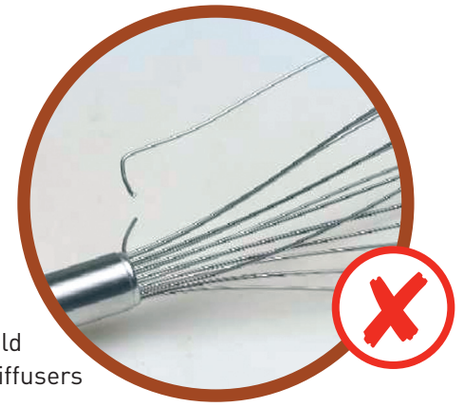
**Never let pest control bait/chemicals, including sprays, come into direct contact with food, packaging, equipment or surfaces because they are likely to be poisonous to people.**

## Personal hygiene

Work clothes should be long sleeved and light coloured to show the dirt with no external pockets and suitable head covering. This prevents skin from touching food and helps to stop hair, fibres and the contents of pockets getting onto food (refer to advice on Personal Hygiene, section 4 pages 20-22).

## Repair equipment

Repair or replace any equipment or utensils that are damaged or have loose parts as loose parts may get into food by accident.



## Glass

It is a good idea to limit the use of glass in the kitchen as this helps to reduce the risk of broken glass getting into food. A glass policy should be in place which includes a procedure for glass breakages. Suitable diffusers on light fittings are recommended.

## Packaging

Take care to dispose of packaging, strings, plastic as soon as you remove it, to prevent it contaminating the food. Keeping surfaces clear and clean will prevent chemicals and objects getting into food as well as preventing the spread of bacteria.

Avoid re-using food packaging to store food. Often packaging is designed to be used once with a certain food, so it might not be safe to use it again, or to use it with a different food. If food packaging is used in a way that it was not designed for, chemicals could transfer into the food. Instead, use re-usable containers that have been designed to store food (food grade).

## Stones/soil etc

Make sure all deliveries are physically checked and vegetables are thoroughly washed to prevent stones/slugs etc contaminating the food.

## What to do if things go wrong

- **If chemicals or objects, such as glass or insects, get into food, dispose of the food.**
- **If you find pests or signs of pests, take action immediately.**
- **If you find objects in food that has been delivered, reject the delivery, if possible, and contact your supplier immediately.**

# Advice on How to Declare and Manage Allergens

## Allergen declaration

Your customers need to know if any food products you sell or provide contain any of the 14 EU listed allergens as an ingredient (see page 65 for a list of the 14 allergens).

In order to provide this information, you must identify and record each of the 14 EU listed allergens used in your business. In addition, you should put controls in place to minimise cross-contamination of other foods with these allergens.

Allergic reactions can make people very ill and can sometimes lead to death. If a customer has an allergy and inadvertently eats a food that contains an allergen that is not declared, there can be serious health consequences for that customer.

## How do you identify and record the allergens you use?

1. Look at your menus.
2. Identify all the ingredients of each menu item, including drinks, sauces, gravies, glazes, etc.
3. Identify the allergens in these ingredients: look at labels, product specifications, etc.
4. Record allergens in the Menu Items allergen Check List (section 3, page 66) or another allergen recording tool, e.g. the Food Safety Authority of Ireland's (FSAI's) MenuCal (see www.fsai.ie).

## How must allergens be declared in your catering premises?

Legally, all food allergens used in the food that your food business serves must be declared in writing. The legislation[1] sets out how you must declare this information. The allergen information must:

- Be indicated in writing, either at the point of presentation, or sale or supply.
- Use the word 'contains' followed by the specific allergens, e.g. "contains wheat, barley, soya and egg".
- Identify the food items that contain particular allergens, e.g. "spaghetti bolognese – contains milk, celery and wheat".
- Be in legible handwriting, or printed so that it is easy to read.
- Be written at least in English, or written in both Irish and English. It may also be written in other languages as well.
- Be freely and easily located and accessible to the customer before they buy the food, without requiring assistance from staff.

[1]Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers

## Options for displaying allergen information in your premises

Examples of ways to display the information include:

- Listing the allergens next to each menu item.
- Providing it in hard copy, e.g. the allergen information is located in one or more obvious locations on the premises.
- Providing it in electronic format, e.g. having a computer screen displaying the allergen information.

The location of allergen information must be clearly signposted (e.g. on menus or other written material available on the premises) so that your customers can locate and access it easily without assistance, e.g. "You can find the allergen information folder beside the till."

## Distance selling

Distance selling includes food businesses, e.g. takeaways where food is ordered by phone or electronically and delivered to the consumer. Allergen information must be provided prior to purchase and at the point of delivery. It must be in writing at one of these points, e.g. on the menu or in the form of leaflets/catalogues or other printed material. This information can be specific to the purchased product or it could be general supporting material.

## How can I make sure that I declare allergens correctly in my food business?

In order to do this, you must first know all the allergens present in the ingredients you use. Food you receive at your premises must have the correct allergen declarations, and you must use this information to provide accurate allergen information to your customers.

All food supplied to your food business must declare allergen information either on a label or in accompanying commercial documents, e.g. a product specification document. In order to ensure that you receive this information from your suppliers, you should only buy from reputable suppliers who have allergen management systems in place (i.e. suppliers who have identified and risk assessed their food allergens and put suitable controls in place). Use the supplier list on page 6.

## Common mistakes – do not forget to:

- **List all the allergens used in a recipe and make sure that they are all declared in writing for that dish.**
- **Review the cooking methods that may introduce an allergen as an ingredient (e.g. peanut oil used for frying).**
- **Provide and update allergen information for specials, seasonal foods, children's menus, early bird menus, afternoon tea menus, at coffee stations and on drinks menus.**
- **Ensure that allergens are clearly identified on the container when decanting products.**
- **Declare allergens in sauces, gravies, condiments and garnishes, e.g. wheat flour used to thicken gravy, soya in marinades and sauces, and anchovies, cream, or butter in sauces.**
- **Declare allergens in egg washes and glazes.**
- **Declare allergens in hot and cold drinks, such as glasses of wine, draught beer or cider, juices or smoothies, coffees and teas, etc.**
- **Declare the name of the cereal for cereals containing gluten, e.g. 'wheat' must be declared. 'Gluten' may also be displayed in addition but not instead.**
- **Declare the name of the individual nut for items containing nuts, e.g. 'almond' must be declared, not simply 'nuts'.**
- **Check for sulphites in products such as sausages, wine, soft drinks, cordials, peeled potatoes and dried fruit.**
- **Make sure that your staff know what to do when ingredients or recipes change so that customers are not put at risk.**

MenuCal

**MenuCal** is a free allergen tool that can help you provide your customers with written allergen information. It is available at www.fsai.ie.

## The 14 EU listed food allergens

# Be Food Allergen Aware

Food Safety AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

Five steps to help you comply with **the law** on declaring the use of food allergens in non-prepacked food for your customers:

**1** Declare the use of the 14 food allergens in writing

**2** Ensure the allergen information is legible and clear

**3** Ensure the allergen information is easily accessible to your customers

**4** Ensure the allergen information is up-to-date

**5** Monitor your suppliers' allergen information

## Food allergens that **must be declared**

### Cereals

**Cereals containing gluten, namely: wheat (such as spelt and khorasan wheat), rye, barley, oats or their hybridised strains, and products thereof, except:**

a) Wheat based glucose syrups including dextrose
b) Wheat based maltodextrins
c) Glucose syrups based on barley
d) Cereals used for making alcoholic distillates including ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin

### Crustaceans

**Crustaceans and products thereof.**

### Eggs

**Eggs and products thereof.**

### Fish

**Fish and products thereof, except:**

a) Fish gelatine used as a carrier for vitamin or carotenoid preparations
b) Fish gelatine or Isinglass used as fining agent in beer and wine

### Peanuts

**Peanuts and products thereof.**

### Soybeans

**Soybeans and products thereof, except:**

a) Fully refined soybean oil and fat
b) Natural mixed tocopherols (E306), natural D-alpha tocopherol, natural D-alpha tocopherol acetate, natural D-alpha tocopherol succinate from soybean sources
c) Vegetable oils derived phytosterols and phytosterol esters from soybean sources
d) Plant stanol ester produced from vegetable oil sterols from soybean sources

### Milk

**Milk and products thereof (including lactose), except:**

a) Whey used for making alcoholic distillates including ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin
b) Lactitol

### Nuts

**Nuts, (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan nuts, Brazil nuts, pistachio nuts, macadamia/Queensland nuts) and products thereof, except for nuts used for making alcoholic distillates including ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin.**

### Celery

**Celery and products thereof.**

### Mustard

**Mustard and products thereof.**

### Sesame seeds

**Sesame seeds and products thereof.**

### Sulphur dioxide and sulphites

**Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at concentrations of more than 10mg/kg or 10 mg/litre, expressed as $SO_2$, e.g. found in burgers, sausages and wine.**

### Lupin

**Lupin and products thereof.**

### Molluscs

**Molluscs and products thereof.**

For more information on how your food business can comply with these legal requirements, please visit **www.fsai.ie/allergens** or contact us at **info@fsai.ie**

**IMPORTANT:**
Allergen information regarding **"Cereals containing gluten"** must specify the type of cereal, e.g. wheat, and **"Nuts"** must specify the type of nut, e.g. cashew.

# Menu Items Allergen Check List

Food Safety AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

SAFE CATERING

Note – Please state the **name of the cereal(s) containing gluten*** and the **name of the nut(s)**** in the appropriate column

| MENU ITEM<br>Type menu items below and indicate allergens using a tick |  Cereals* |  Crustaceans |  Eggs |  Fish |  Peanuts |  Soybeans |  Milk |  Nuts** |  Celery |  Mustard |  Sesame seeds |  Sulphur dioxide & sulphites*** |  Lupins |  Molluscs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

* Containing gluten (wheat, rye, barley & oats)
** Almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecan, Brazil nuts, pistachio, macadamia
*** e.g. found in sausages, burgers, wine
☑ Means the menu item contains this allergenic ingredient

For more information on how your food business can comply with these legal requirements, please visit **www.fsai.ie/allergens** or contact us at **info@fsai.ie**

## Allergen cross-contamination

The previous section (page 62) examined declaring allergens when they are intentionally used as ingredients in your menu items. However, allergens can also enter your food as a result of cross-contamination. You must put in place controls to minimise the risk of cross-contamination of other food with any of the 14 EU-listed allergens.

Cross-contamination with allergens can occur at any point throughout your business, e.g. deliveries, storage, preparation, cooking, cooling, reheating, display and service. Allergens may be unintentionally added to food as a result of practices such as the use of incorrect recipes, last-minute changes of ingredients, cross-contamination due to poor equipment design, use of contaminated equipment, poor cleaning standards, poor storage, poor staff practices or insufficient staff training.

The allergen controls and corrective actions that can be taken to minimise the risk of cross-contamination with allergens are listed on page 55. The key areas for caterers to focus on are:

- Suppliers/raw ingredients
- Storage
- Preparation and handling (including zoning, scheduling tasks and ingredient use, and equipment design)
- Use of leftovers
- Packaging and labelling
- Cleaning
- Staff practices and training.

With dry ingredients such as wheat flour, it can be difficult to contain the dust generated, and this can present a particular risk of cross-contamination during handling, storage and delivery. Special care should be taken with these types of ingredients.

Consider the methods of cooking when deciding on your menu items and whether there are alternative methods of cooking which pose less of a risk of allergen cross-contamination.

Certain methods of cooking – for example, deep frying – present challenges for allergen management and can only be fully controlled with the use of separate oil or a separate fryer for cooking each separate allergen (e.g. fish, breaded or battered products), or through appropriate cooking schedules whereby non-allergenic foods are cooked first. See the 'Using voluntary precautionary allergen declarations' section on page 68.

## Staff practices and training

Allergic reactions can make people very ill and can sometimes lead to death. In order to prevent any customers with allergies from unknowingly eating foods they are allergic to, your staff must be aware of:

- The list of 14 food allergens that must be declared according to EU food law
- The ingredients containing the 14 food allergens and the menu items they are used in
- The need to declare accurate food allergen information in writing
- The health risks associated with food allergens
- The potential for cross-contamination with allergens they handle

- Being a potential source of allergen contamination and the need to maintain good work practices, both after handling foods containing food allergens and when returning to work from food breaks
- The risk of bringing their own food or drink into areas where foods are stored, handled or prepared

Allergen training should be an integral part of all staff training programmes.

## Some key allergen tips

- **Pizza ovens carry the potential for cross-contamination. If, for example, you are offering allergen-free options on your menu, you must put controls in place to prevent cross-contamination, e.g. use separate/different coloured trays for allergen-free and allergen-containing options.**
- **For toast/toasted sandwiches, provide a designated toaster/sandwich maker that is only used for gluten-free[1] bread.**
- **For fried foods, use separate oil or a separate fryer, for food not containing allergens so that these foods are not contaminated with an allergen.**
- **Do not make a food unsafe for your customers by adding other items or side orders; for example, adding a wafer (made with wheat) to a gluten-free ice cream dish, or serving chips cooked in the same oil as battered products (made with cereals containing gluten) with a gluten-free curry.**
- **Store dedicated equipment for use when cooking allergen-free foods in a lidded box. Make sure this equipment is clearly identified, e.g. by using colour coding or labelling.**

## 'Allergen free' indications

If you choose to advertise a product as being free from any allergens, then you need to put in place controls to ensure that this 'allergen-free' status is maintained until the product reaches the consumer. Using these statements means that the allergen is not detectable (except for 'gluten free' declarations[2]) and that you must be sure that the product is free from cross-contamination. Consider whether you have sufficient controls in place to prevent cross-contamination. With dry ingredients, such as wheat flour, it can be difficult to contain the dust generated, and this can present a particular risk of cross-contamination during handling, storage and delivery. Special care should be taken with these types of ingredients.

Only the terms 'gluten free' and 'very low gluten' may be used to voluntarily indicate the absence or low-level presence of gluten in a food. The term 'gluten free' can only be used if there is no more than 20 mg/kg of gluten in the final product, while 'very low gluten' can only be used if the gluten content is no higher than 100 mg/kg. Further details are available on the FSAI website (www.fsai.ie/faq/gluten_free_declarations.html).

## Using voluntary precautionary allergen declarations

As part of your food safety management system, you must control the use of allergens in your food business. However, where you have established that the risk cannot be effectively controlled, then you need to consider a precautionary allergen declaration so that your customers are informed of the risk involved in consuming the food.

[1] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 828/2014 on the requirements for the provision of information to consumers on the absence or reduced presence of gluten in food stipulates that 'gluten free' means foods that contain 20 mg/kg of gluten or less. Only such foods can be labelled as 'gluten free'.

Examples of situations where this may arise include:

- If you cannot use separate oil or a separate fryer for foods containing allergens
- At a sandwich bar, where many allergenic ingredients are handled and stored close together
- In cook-to-order, where allergenic ingredients needed to make the dishes may be stored in containers close together
- In a self-service area, where it is difficult to monitor or control customer practices.

Precautionary declarations must not confuse or mislead your customers.

These statements are voluntary and are not a substitute for mandatory allergen declarations and effective cross-contamination controls. They should only be used where there is a demonstrable risk that a product may inadvertently contain one or more allergens.

## Passing on precautionary declarations from supplier to consumer

You should ask your suppliers if their precautionary declarations are based on a risk assessment, and then decide whether these declarations should be passed on to your customers.

**To help you monitor that the allergen requirements are being implemented in your business, use the Allergen Controls Review (page 70) on a regular basis.**

People can be allergic to, or intolerant of, many different foods or food ingredients. However, Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011[2] stipulates that only the use of 14 specific food allergens in the production or preparation of foods (including beverages) must be declared. The presence of other ingredients outside of the 14 regulated allergens may also be declared voluntarily.

[2] Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers.

# Allergen Controls Review

**Checks of allergen controls which should be carried out by the Manager or Supervisor regularly***

*** tick frequency checks carried out:**

☐ Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Monthly

| | Satisfactory Yes | Satisfactory No | Details Of Action Taken |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Staff training** | | | |
| Are all staff trained on the allergen declaration requirements? | | | |
| Are all staff trained in carrying out the allergen controls in place? | | | |
| Are staff handling food as little as possible? | | | |
| Are staff following good work practices when handling allergens? | | | |
| Are staff washing their hands and changing their protective clothing so as to prevent cross-contamination? | | | |
| Has allergen training been recorded in SC6-hygiene training records? | | | |
| **Allergen declaration** | | | |
| Is allergen information provided for all items on the menu, including drinks? | | | |
| Does the allergen information include all the allergens contained in the dish? | | | |
| For cereals is the name of the cereal declared? | | | |
| For nuts is the name of the individual nut declared? | | | |
| **Suppliers and deliveries** | | | |
| Are all suppliers on the suppliers list? | | | |
| Are deliveries the same as the specification ordered? | | | |
| Are all allergens declared on food deliveries? | | | |
| Are the product ingredients checked against the Menu Items Allergen Check List? | | | |
| Are deliveries checked to make sure packaging is intact and contamination has not occurred? | | | |
| Is food delivered in such a way as to prevent cross-contamination of other foods? | | | |
| **Storage** | | | |
| Are allergens stored correctly to prevent cross-contamination? | | | |
| Is allergen labelling information retained with each product? | | | |
| Where food is decanted into smaller containers, are they in closed containers and is the labelling information kept with the product? | | | |

| | Satisfactory Yes | Satisfactory No | Details Of Action Taken |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Preparation and handling, including cooking, reheating and cooling** | | | |
| Do staff follow the recipe when preparing dishes? | | | |
| When using leftovers do staff only use in a dish that already contains the allergen or if not do they make sure the allergen is declared for the dish e.g. menu update? | | | |
| Is dedicated equipment e.g. toasters being used correctly? | | | |
| Are dedicated utensils protected from contamination e.g. stored in separate dedicated container? | | | |
| Are equipment and utensils thoroughly cleaned after preparing food containing allergens? | | | |
| **Cold serve/hot hold/display/service** | | | |
| Is food protected/covered where possible? | | | |
| Are designated utensils used appropriately? | | | |
| Are containers not overfilled? | | | |
| Are all spillages e.g. milk, cleaned up immediately? | | | |
| Is service area kept clean and tidy? | | | |
| Is there a sign at self-service areas advising customers to use designated utensils? | | | |
| **Cleaning** | | | |
| Are food storage containers clean? | | | |
| Are all food areas kept clean? | | | |
| Are surfaces cleaned after preparing foods that contain allergens and before preparing foods that do not contain allergens? | | | |
| Are all spillages of allergens cleaned up immediately? | | | |
| Is the cleaning equipment kept clean? | | | |

# Advice on Acrylamide

## What is acrylamide?

Acrylamide is a chemical that naturally forms in baked or fried starchy foods, e.g. chips and bread. The browner the food is after cooking, the higher the level of acrylamide present. Acrylamide begins to form at temperatures above 120 °C and rapidly increases at temperatures above 180 °C, so controlling the temperature that you cook these foods at is very important.

## Why is acrylamide a concern?

Acrylamide may increase the risk of developing cancer. Consumers are frequently exposed to acrylamide because it is present in a wide range of everyday foods. It is virtually impossible to eliminate it completely from these foods, so efforts need to be made to reduce the levels of acrylamide to the lowest possible level.

There is legislation[1] in place setting out what you need to do to reduce the levels of acrylamide in your food.

## What foods do you need to think about?

- Potato products, e.g. chips, roast potatoes, wedges, crisps, snacks, and crackers
- Bread and bakery products, e.g. bread, toast, crumpets, cookies, biscuits, scones, pastries, and gingerbread.

## What do you need in order to reduce acrylamide levels?

- Cook food to a light golden colour and not to a dark brown colour, e.g. toast, chips, roast potatoes.
- Avoid overcooking, excessive crisping or burning.
- Do not accept over-baked or burnt products from suppliers.
- Consider using alternative methods of cooking where possible, e.g. steam or boil potatoes instead of frying or roasting them.
- Follow cooking instructions given on the product label, and pre-heat fryers and ovens before cooking.
- Work with your suppliers to ensure that they have acrylamide controls in place.

## What are your responsibilities?

You must put controls in place to ensure that the acrylamide levels in starchy foods you cook and serve are as low as possible. The information in this section is for independent caterers who are not part of a franchise or larger commercial group, as there are extra requirements for these types of caterers – see www.fsai.ie for more information.

[1]Commission Regulation (EU) 2017/2158 establishing mitigation measures and benchmark levels for the reduction of the presence of acrylamide in food

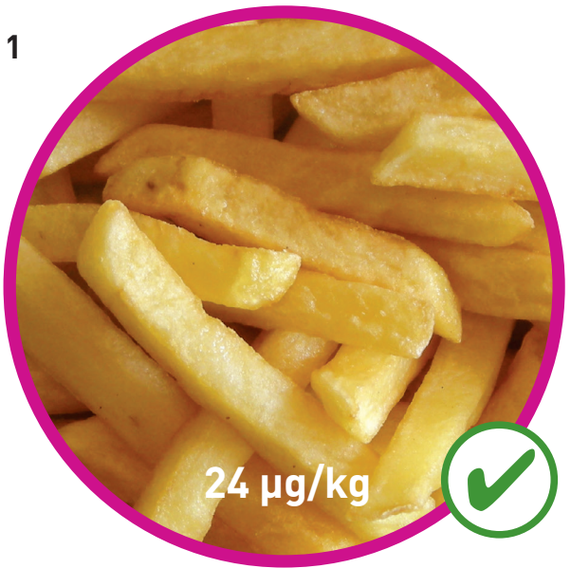
## What do you do if your customer is not happy with light golden chips?

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) recommends that starchy foods be cooked to a light golden colour using the controls outlined in this Section, and you should make your customers aware of this and of the risks involved with being exposed to too much acrylamide.

# Acrylamide Colour Chart

Visibly display this colour chart so that staff preparing chips can check that they are a light golden colour and not overcooked. This chart could be covered or laminated to protect it in the kitchen.

1




2


3


4


Image 1 - 24 micrograms acrylamide per kilogram

Image 2 - 130 micrograms acrylamide per kilogram

Image 3 - 690 micrograms acrylamide per kilogram

Image 4 - 1590 micrograms acrylamide per kilogram

**EU Regulation 2017/2158 sets a benchmark level for French fries (ready-to-eat) of 500 µg/kg.**