

Catering From Home

Are you planning to cater from home for family or friends, perhaps for a wedding or birthday, or for some other gathering? You may be thinking of preparing food at home and then taking it somewhere else to be eaten, such as a community centre, social club or village hall.

As the person preparing or handling the food, it is your responsibility to make sure your food does not make the guests ill.

You will also need to take extra care if any young children, pregnant women, older people or anyone who is ill will be attending the function. This is because if anyone in these vulnerable groups gets food poisoning they are more likely to become seriously ill.



The most common errors

Some of the most common errors that may lead to food poisoning are:

- ◆ Poor hygiene:
 - Hands should be washed frequently with warm water and antibacterial soap whilst preparing food, especially between handling raw and ready to eat foods
- ◆ Poor storage:
 - Check labels for storage instructions and ensure food is not left unrefrigerated for long periods of time
 - Keep raw items of meat, poultry, fish and other foods below cooked or ready to eat foods and in a leak-proof container if possible
- ◆ Temperature control:
 - The coldest part of your refrigerator should be kept between 0°C & 5°C
 - Don't overload your refrigerator or it's efficiency will suffer
 - Prepare foods that need to be refrigerated last – don't leave them standing around, and aim to cool cooked foods within 60 to 90 minutes
- ◆ Cooking:
 - Thorough cooking is the key to killing most of the harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning
 - Remember, larger joints will require longer cooking times – in any event you must always ensure the centre of the food is piping hot

- ◆ Preparing food:
 - Again, keep raw and ready to eat foods separate
 - The transfer of bacteria from one food to another is called cross-contamination and is a major cause of food poisoning
 - Take care when using knives or chopping boards and make sure they are washed and disinfected in between use with different foods. Use separate knives and chopping boards where possible for raw and cooked foods
 - Hands should be washed frequently with warm water and antibacterial soap whilst preparing food, especially between handling raw and ready to eat foods

Catering from home for large functions should not be taken lightly so remember to plan carefully, that proper temperature control is essential, avoid cross-contamination, and take care with eggs.

For further information on catering from home, go to the Food Standards Agency's 'Eat Well, Be Well' website, by clicking on the following link:
<http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/>.

You can contact the Food Safety Team about any concerns you may have:
01225 776655