

## **Catering Options – A Guide for Departments and Faculties**

Departments may choose to offer refreshments at a range of meetings, functions, or events, from simple tea and biscuits through to full meals. This guide is intended to support the selection of suitable catering options, promote best practice, and ensure compliance with legal requirements.

Departments are responsible for ensuring that, whenever refreshments are provided, all reasonable precautions are taken to guarantee the safety of the food and drink supplied. It is not only the caterer that can be prosecuted for a breach of food safety but also the University and/or individuals responsible for providing the food.

**It is an offence under Food Safety legislation to supply any food or drink that is unsafe. Food is deemed to be unsafe if it is injurious to health and/or unfit for human consumption.**

### General

All food and drink must be prepared, stored, and consumed in suitable and appropriate areas (not laboratories / workshops). These areas must comply with food safety legislation. For further information on food safety legislation please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 1.

All food preparation areas must be free from sources of contamination e.g. biological (pathogens), chemical (oils, acids, degreasers) and physical (glass, dust, swarf).

Information on allergens must be available. For further information on allergens please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 13.

Persons who regularly prepare or handle food, even if it is not part of their main duties, must be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene. The level of training required is dependent on the role of the individual and the types of food involved. For further information on food hygiene training please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 4.

Any department with catering facilities, other than those used solely by staff and students for the storage and preparation of their own food/drink, may need to register with the local authority Environmental Health Department as a food premises. For further information on food safety legislation please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 1.

Decide the type of catering required

- A. Light refreshments. Examples of which include hot and cold beverages, biscuits, crisps, ambient cakes etc.
- B. Other refreshments and/or main meals. Examples of which include sandwiches, canapés, finger buffet, hot or cold buffets, served lunches or dinners etc.
- C. Catering provided by an external third party embedded on University premises such as at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

If “A”

Departments may provide their own light refreshments, but food and drink must be purchased from a reputable supplier and receipts kept. Where practicable, ingredients should be purchased from a Preferred Supplier listed with the Central Purchasing Office ([www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/purchasing](http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/purchasing)).

Low-risk foods such as biscuits, tea/coffee, crisps, cakes (not cream) should be stored in sealed containers, where they cannot become contaminated or provide a food source for pests, until required.

Packaging must be retained to ensure allergen information is available.

Fresh milk must be refrigerated below 8°C until required and used within its use by-date. Long life milk can be stored at room temperature but once opened it must be treated as fresh and labelled on date of opening and stored following the manufacturer's instructions.

Serving staff must be in good health and always maintain strict personal hygiene. Hands must be washed before handling any unwrapped food and there must be a potable (clean) water supply for making beverages.

If “B”

If you choose to provide high-risk foods they should be purchased either from University Catering Service or a preferred supplier listed with the University ([External catering suppliers | University Catering](#)). These premises have undergone food safety audits to ensure the foods they provide comply with food safety legislation and the University's food safety policy.

## Food Safety Information. Number 2

Sandwiches and buffets should, wherever possible, be scheduled to arrive shortly before service. Upon receipt, all food must remain covered and safeguarded against potential hazards. Cold items must be refrigerated at temperatures below 8°C (preferably 5°C) until served.

All dietary requirements food must remain covered and segregated to prevent any contamination.

Once removed from refrigeration, all cold food must be eaten within 2 hours. After 2 hours the food must be refrigerated and eaten straight from the fridge later that same day or disposed of. Hot food must be kept hot (above 63°C) or eaten within 2 hours, after this time it must be disposed of.

In general, departments are strongly discouraged from obtaining sandwiches and other high-risk foods to supply hospitality for a meeting, function or an event due to the risks involved. However, should they choose to do so, food must only be purchased from a reputable supplier and receipts kept. Strict controls must be implemented to ensure that the foods are transported, stored, prepared, and served safely and in compliance with all relevant legislation. This includes occasions when departments purchase pre-packaged sandwiches, cut them into smaller units and transfer them to a plate for service. It is essential staff have a good understanding of food hygiene.

Departments deciding to use caterers not on the preferred supplier list must appoint someone who will be wholly responsible in the event of a food safety incident.

### If “C”

Where outside organisations rent or are provided with space for regular catering they must be provided with a written contract. In the case of embedded third-party outlets only catering providers that have been audited by the University may be used.

### Further Information

On the Food Standards Agency website [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

In other leaflets in the food safety information series

From Nick White, Head of University Catering or Jenny Clare, Food Safety Compliance Manager