

## **Purchase, Delivery and Storage of Food – A Guide for Departments and Faculties**

The purchase, delivery, and storage of food form an essential chain that ensures safety, quality, and convenience. Food purchasing involves selecting items based on freshness, safety, and seasonality, whether from supermarkets, reputable suppliers or a preferred supplier. Delivery then bridges the gap between supplier and consumer. Finally, correct storage safeguards food until consumption. Together, these steps ensure that food remains safe, nutritious, and enjoyable from the point of purchase to the moment it is served.

### Guidelines

All food and drink must be purchased from a reputable supplier.

Receipts or records showing where and when food was purchased must be kept.

You must be able to demonstrate how food was stored and handled from the point of receipt through to service. Maintaining this record provides crucial evidence in the event of a suspected food-related illness, serving as part of a due diligence defence.

Ingredient details must be retained so that allergen information can be supplied whenever required.

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)).

Deliveries must be accepted by a suitably trained and competent individual who understands proper receiving procedures.

All food and drink must be stored only in appropriate food-safe areas and must never be kept in laboratories, workshops, or similar non-food environments.

Food and drink should be stored off the floor to prevent contamination, allow checks for signs of pests and improve access for cleaning. The same standard applies to all items that may come into contact with food, such as serviettes, cutlery, plates, crockery, and equipment.

Food and drink must never be stored near to cleaning chemicals or cleaning equipment.

All food and drink must be discarded once past its 'use-by' date and must not be consumed. In cases where sandwich platters or buffets are not provided with 'use-by' information, the food must be eaten on the day it is received, with any leftovers disposed of immediately.

### Low-risk foods

Food such as biscuits, tea/coffee, sugar, confectionary, crisps, cakes (not cream) may be purchased from reputable suppliers. Where practicable, they 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)).

When purchasing or receiving low-risk foods, all items should be checked to ensure that packaging is undamaged, products are in date, and ingredient information is clear and legible.

Low-risk food should be stored in sealed containers in an appropriate place, where they cannot become contaminated. Packaging must be retained for allergen information.

Foods for special diets / free-from items must be kept separate.

### High-risk foods

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.

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 e.g. pizza, hot buffet items, must be kept hot above 63°C or eaten within 2 hours of receipt. After this time, they must be disposed of.

### General

Departments deciding to use caterers not on the preferred supplier list take on full responsibility for performing the appropriate checks to ensure the caterer is a reputable supplier. In addition, the department must appoint someone who will be wholly responsible in the event of a food safety incident.

A reputable supplier (as a minimum):

- Is registered with the Local Authority Environmental Health department.
- Complies with all legal and food safety standards.
- Uses staff suitably trained in food hygiene.
- Has a documented food safety management system based on HACCP principles.
- Transports food in temperature-controlled vehicles or packaging.

Departments are advised against self-catering because of the potential risks it presents. If a department decides to self-cater by purchasing food from supermarkets for a buffet, or on a 'bring and share' basis, certain precautions must be observed and key issues considered - **large events come with greater responsibilities.**

Catering for parties and functions often involves large amounts of both cooked and uncooked food competing for fridge, freezer, and cooker space. This increases the risk of cross-contamination and places extra pressure on refrigeration units, which may struggle to maintain safe temperatures.

Careful planning of cooking and storage is therefore essential. Many foods such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, and rice can cause food poisoning if not handled and stored correctly. To ensure safe catering at functions, adequate facilities and controls must be in place; if these cannot be provided, the event should not be catered for at all.

#### 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