

Preparation and Service of Food – A Guide for Departments and Faculties

Food preparation must always be carried out in a manner that ensures food is safe, hygienic, and free from contamination. All staff are required to:

- **Maintain personal hygiene** – wash hands thoroughly before handling food and wear clean protective clothing.
- **Prevent cross-contamination** – use separate equipment and work surfaces for raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- **Ensure cleanliness of the environment** – keep preparation areas, utensils, and equipment clean and disinfected.
- **Control temperature** – store, cook, and cool food at safe temperatures to reduce the risk of bacterial growth.
- **Monitor for pests** – report any signs of pest activity immediately and follow pest control procedures.
- **Follow legal requirements** – comply with all food safety regulations and best practice.

Guidelines

All food and drink must be prepared by appropriately trained personnel and consumed in suitable and appropriate areas (not laboratories / workshops). These areas must comply with food safety legislation.

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

Access to food preparation areas must be restricted to essential staff only and food safety rules adhered to. Any visitor or person entering the kitchen must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment such as an apron and hands must be washed.

Excellent personal hygiene and cleanliness are essential for anyone preparing food, especially hand hygiene. Hand hygiene is one of the most important personal hygiene controls when dealing with food. For further information on personal hygiene requirements please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 8.

All surfaces, chopping boards, utensils, crockery, pans etc. must be cleaned and disinfected after use and must be in a good state of repair. For further information on cleaning and pest control please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 9.

Food Safety Information. Number 7

Individuals suffering from the symptoms of food poisoning (e.g. diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach upsets) must not prepare, handle or serve food, as they could contaminate the food and spread the infection to other staff and customers. It is possible that people can still spread bacteria or viruses even if they feel better, therefore, they must not return to work until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours. If someone you live with has diarrhoea or vomiting this too must be reported to management as exclusion from open food handling may be required. If in doubt, you should contact the Head of University Catering or the Food Safety Compliance Manager.

Certain foods have the potential to cause allergic reactions in individuals that are sensitive to those foods e.g. nuts, shellfish, sesame seeds etc. Allergens are detailed on food packaging which must be retained for reference. For further information on allergens please refer to Food Safety Information leaflet number 13.

Ensure any special diets that are catered for are kept totally separate, covered and any manufacturers ingredient labels retained. Where there is doubt, discuss with the person who has the allergy - never guess or assume.

Food should not be prepared too far in advance and should not be kept at room temperature for longer than necessary during preparation.

Potable water (suitable for drinking) must be used to wash and prepare food or make ice (never use laboratory ice makers).

Fresh fruit, salads and vegetables should be thoroughly washed in potable (drinking) water (unless they are purchased pre-washed).

Food should remain covered and protected until required to prevent contamination (either in its original packaging, a sealed food container or using food grade cling-film or foil).

Direct handling of foods should be minimised as far as is practicable. Tongs, utensils or disposable gloves (food grade) should be used.

It is important if people request information about a particular food, that accurate information is always provided. If there is any uncertainty, never guess.

In cases of alleged illness or injury due to food, the Head of University Catering must be contacted without undue delay. An initial investigation should be carried out and any remedial action taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Where there is a concern, the Head of University Catering should be contacted for advice. Complaints must be recorded and detailed records kept. The University Insurance Manager must be informed of all complaints.

Food Safety Information. Number 7

Chilled Food

Once removed from refrigeration, all high-risk 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

It is important to cook and reheat food thoroughly (especially meat/poultry). It should be piping hot all the way through to the centre of the thickest part of the food and should reach an internal temperature of at least 75°C.

The use of a disinfected probe thermometer is always recommended. Probe wipes, suitable for use with food, should be used to disinfect the food probe.

When serving hot food, it must be kept hot (above 63°C) or eaten within 2 hours, after this time it must be disposed of.

Extra care should be taken when using microwave ovens as they do not heat evenly and some parts of the food may not be hot.

Food should not be reheated more than once.

Further Information

On the Food Standards Agency website 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