

Students' Union Guide to Food Safety

Everyone who prepares food needs to make sure they follow good food hygiene to ensure that the food they serve is safe to eat. And it makes sense too, because good hygiene prevents food poisoning, protects your reputation with customers and helps you comply with the law.

This guide informs you about food hygiene, outlining why it's important and what your responsibilities are.

Caterers, Restaurants and Takeaways

If you are planning to use a catering or other food business, you must ensure they are registered with and approved by the environmental health service (EHS) at BANES Council.

Premises will need to be approved if they deal with and supply:

- meat and meat products
- eggs
- milk and dairy products
- fish and fish products

Food hygiene regulations set out the basic hygiene requirements for all businesses and require them to make sure that:

- the food they provide is safe to eat
- the premises meet hygiene standards
- staff follow good personal hygiene practice
- food safety problems are identified and controlled
- staff receive adequate instruction and/or training in food hygiene, and are supervised
- food is kept at a safe temperature
- they keep written records of how they manage food safety hazards

You should be aware that food businesses - farmers being the exception - are now required to use food safety management procedures based on the principles of HACCP (hazard analysis critical control point).

Once a business has been approved they will be provided with an EHO premises inspection certificate.

The Students' Union will not allow you to use outside caterers that cannot provide the following documents:

Product Liability insurance certificate

B&NES Council food hygiene certificate

Latest EHO premises inspection document

Food Preparation

Food hygiene: cleaning and cross-contamination

Cleaning and preventing cross-contamination are both essential to make sure the food you serve is safe to eat.

Effective cleaning gets rid of bacteria on hands, equipment and surfaces, which helps to stop harmful bacteria from spreading onto food. You should:

- make sure that everyone who handles food washes their hands before starting work, after a break, after going to the toilet, after emptying a bin and before starting a new task
- clean food areas and equipment between different tasks, especially after handling raw food
- clean as you go, mopping up spills as they happen
- use appropriate cleaning products and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- prevent food waste building up

Cross-contamination is when bacteria spread between food, surfaces or equipment. It's most likely to happen when:

- raw food touches or drips onto other food
- raw food touches or drips onto equipment or surfaces
- people touch raw food with their hands

For example, if raw meat drips onto ready-to-eat food in the fridge, bacteria will spread from the meat to the food.

If you cut raw meat on a chopping board, harmful bacteria will spread from the meat to the board and knife. If you then use the same board and knife - without washing them thoroughly - to prepare ready-to-eat food, such as salad, the bacteria will spread from the board and knife to the food.

Hands and cloths can also spread bacteria. So remember to:

- keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate
- wash your hands thoroughly after touching raw food

- clean surfaces and equipment thoroughly before you start to prepare food and after they have been touched by raw food

Food hygiene: cooking and chilling safely

Cooking and chilling are both essential to make sure the food you serve is safe to eat.

Cooking

The only cooked foods that the SU will allow are baked goods, such as cakes, and BBQs.

Thorough cooking kills harmful bacteria in food; therefore, don't serve any food that isn't sufficiently cooked - once food is cooked, serve it immediately or keep it hot until serving.

Barbequing Foods:

- Barbequed meat can look cooked when it isn't cooked through. Always use a thermometer to check. The SU can supply these
- Never part-cook on a BBQ and finish cooking later. However, you can part-cook poultry in the kitchen before you cook on the BBQ.
- To light the BBQ always use proper BBQ lighter fuel and not petrol or other flammable liquids.
- If using a gas BBQ ensure the gas lights immediately. If the gas fails to light on the first or second attempt turn off the gas for a few minutes before trying again.
- Position BBQs on level ground away from fences, hedges and trees or anything that could catch fire.
- Ensure you have sufficient food preparation and serving areas.

There is a separate BBQ checklist.

Thermometers

For safety, food must be cooked thoroughly. It is essential to use a thermometer when cooking meat to take the guesswork out of cooking and to assure that a safe temperature has been reached to destroy harmful bacteria such as Salmonella and *E.coli* O157:H7. Using a thermometer is the only reliable way to ensure safety and to determine the "doneness" of most foods. To be safe, a product must be cooked to an internal temperature high enough to destroy any harmful bacteria that may have been in the food.

Recent research has shown that colour and texture changes are not reliable indicators that all bacteria have been destroyed. For example, ground beef may turn brown before it has reached a temperature that will destroy bacteria.

The temperature at which different pathogenic bacteria are destroyed varies, as does the “doneness” temperature for different meat and poultry products. A roast or steak that has never been pierced in any way during slaughter, processing or preparation that has reached an internal temperature of 145 °F is safe to eat.

Tips for Thermometer Use:

- Use an “instant-read” thermometer to check temperatures. They are designed to be used toward the end of cooking time and register a temperature in about 15 seconds.
- If the meat is not thick enough to check from the top, insert the thermometer in sideways.
- The thermometer should penetrate the thickest part of the food.
- To check the calibration, place the stem in ice water as described below. Most thermometers have a calibration nut under the dial that can be adjusted.
- Thoroughly wash the thermometer after each use.

Recommended Internal Temperatures for Meat

Most pathogenic bacteria are destroyed between 140 °F and 160 °F, but the recommendations for thorough cooking varies between the type of meat or poultry. See the table below for minimum recommended internal temperatures.

Ground meats must be cooked thoroughly to kill harmful bacteria. Unlike whole muscle meat, which is sterile inside, the grinding process exposes the interior meat to bacteria on the surface, in the air, on equipment or on people’s hands. To kill these bacteria, you must cook ground meat to at least 160 °F.

Minimum Internal Temperatures

These temperatures ensure that food-borne bacteria have been destroyed. For reasons of personal taste or texture preferences, consumers may choose to cook meat and poultry to higher temperatures.

145 °F Beef, lamb and veal steaks, chops
 cooked medium rare (cooked medium to
 160 °F). Fish.

160 °F Ground beef, veal and lamb.
 Pork, all cuts.

Storage

Keeping food chilled stops bacteria from growing and multiplying. Some foods need to be kept chilled to keep them safe - for example food with a "Use by" date, or ready-to-eat food such as prepared salads. Follow these guidelines for food chilling:

- put food that needs to be kept chilled in the fridge straight away
- keep chilled food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible during preparation
- keep chilled food cold when it's on display
- don't overload fridges

Food Safety: allergies

Some people have very severe allergies to certain foods. Such allergies can be life threatening, even if the allergic person eats just a very tiny amount of the food.

Foods that can cause severe allergic reactions include peanuts and other nuts (including Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts, cashews and pecans), milk, eggs, fish, shellfish (including mussels, clams, crabs and shrimps), soya, sesame seeds, lupin and gluten (which is found in wheat, rye and barley).

It is especially important to know which of your dishes contain these foods, so you can pass this information on to your customers or employees. *All foods that may contain any of the above should be clearly labeled.* Remember, even a tiny amount can cause a severe reaction in someone who is sensitive.

In case a customer asks about the ingredients of a meal, make sure there is always someone on duty who knows or can find out the ingredients of all the foods you provide. Remember that this will include individual ingredients of all the foods, sauces and seasonings you have used. If you are not sure whether a meal contains the food that the customer is asking about, say you are not sure. *Never guess.*

If a dish contains one of the foods listed above, make sure this is reflected in the name or the menu description, for example "carrot and nut salad".

If you think someone is having a severe allergic reaction, do not move them - ring 999, explain that you think they are having an allergic reaction and ask for a paramedic.