

Food Safety When Eating Out

Food businesses have a responsibility to serve food that is safe to eat. However, there are some basic measures you can take that will minimise the risk of food poisoning when eating out.

Premises and equipment

The store should appear clean and tidy. Dirty floors, work surfaces and tables can carry bacteria and attract pests.



Food handlers

Staff should be clean, tidy and well presented with long hair tied back and their uniform clean.



High-risk foods

Food-poisoning bacteria can grow and multiply on some types of food more easily than others. These high-risk foods include:

- raw and cooked meat, including poultry such as chicken and turkey, and foods containing these, such as casseroles, curries and lasagne
- dairy products, such as custard and dairy-based desserts like custard tarts and cheesecake
- eggs and egg products, such as mousse
- small goods such as hams and salamis
- seafood, such as seafood salad, patties, fish balls, stews containing seafood and fish stock
- cooked rice and pasta
- prepared salads like coleslaws, pasta salads and rice salads
- prepared fruit salads
- ready-to-eat foods, including sandwiches, rolls, and pizzas that contain any of the food above.



Self-service and salad bars

Self-service salad/dessert bars in restaurants can be popular but there are some food safety issues to keep in mind.



Hot food should ideally be served steaming hot, in hot food displays or over burners. However, in a buffet situation short periods of time at room temperature are acceptable. Chilled food should be kept chilled in refrigerated cabinets. Once again short periods at room temperature are acceptable.

Fresh food should be brought out regularly, and it should not be combined with the leftovers from the food being replaced. Each salad or dessert should have its own utensil. Use the one that is allocated to the item and don't mix the serving utensils. Hold the utensils by the handle and, when replacing, ensure that the handle does not come into contact with the food.

Never touch or taste food on display. If you see anyone doing this, report it to a staff member. Food should be protected from coughs and sneezes by a guard – usually a clear plastic, or glass cover extending over the food.

Buying lunch

Pre-made sandwiches and rolls containing perishable ingredients, such as soft cheeses and meats, should preferably be stored under refrigeration, or otherwise at cooler room temperatures for no more than four hours. Do not buy 'tired-looking' products, as they may have been at room temperature for too long.

Food in hot display cabinets should be steaming

hot. Avoid purchasing food that is stacked too high in hot display cabinets. Return lukewarm pies and other filled products to the shop. Minced meats, such as hamburgers and sausages, and chickens should be cooked right through. Food from take-away outlets should be eaten within a few hours.

Doggy Bags

It is at the restaurant's discretion to offer customers the option of taking their leftover food home. This is often referred to as a 'doggy bag'. If you do take a 'doggy bag' home, ensure that you take the following measures:

- Refrigerate the food as soon as possible or throw it out if it's been out of refrigeration longer than two hours,
- Reheat the food to piping hot, above 75°C,
- Discard the food if not eaten within 24 hours.



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