Electronic Communication

It is important to include an up-to-date email on the renewal form to ensure you are easily contactable by Council. Where possible digital copies of documents can be provided to reduce the use of paper. If you would like documents to be sent via email you will have to select that as your preferred contact method on the Food Business Licence Renewal form. Please note that Food Business Licences will still be posted to ensure you have a physical copy to display in your food premises. We are also transitioning to the use of tablets for annual and event inspections.

Washing Fruit & Vegetables

Washing fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce and carrots helps remove contaminants such as soil and other residues that might be present on the food before use. A dedicated food preparation sink should be used if frequently washing foods such as fruits and vegetables. The dedicated food preparation sink should not be used to wash hands or utensils.

Answers to Quiz

1. False - Just like other foods, fruit and vegetables may carry a risk of foodborne illness. Always rinse produce under running tap water, including fruits and vegetables even with skins and rinds that are not eaten unless labelled “ready-to-eat” or “washed”.
2. False - Food must be rapidly heated to 60°C for hot holding.
3. True - When cooling cooked potentially hazardous food, it must be cooled to 21°C in two hours or less, then cooled further from 21°C to 5°C in four hours or less.
4. False - Bacteria can survive freezing temperatures. Freezing is not a method for making food safe to eat. When food is thawed, bacteria can still be present and may begin to multiply. Cooking food to the proper internal temperature is the best way to kill harmful bacteria.
5. False - The only way to know that food has been cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature is to use a probe thermometer. Ground meat should be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature of 70°C, as measured by a probe thermometer.
6. False - Rinsing chicken with water can splash juices and perhaps bacteria onto your kitchen surfaces where they can contaminate food. Any bacteria on your chicken will be killed by cooking it correctly to the right temperature, so there is no need to rinse as you might with ready to eat food.

Food Safety Websites

Please see below for some useful websites on food safety and regulation of food businesses:

- Queensland Health: - www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/industry-environment/food-safety
- Standards Australia & New Zealand: - www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Safe Food Queensland: - www.safefood.qld.gov.au
- Food Safety Information Council: - www.foodsafety.asn.au
- I’m Alert Food Safety: - www.imalert.com.au

Rockhampton Regional Council

Contact us
Environment and Public Health Unit
P: 07 4932 9000 or 1300 22 55 77
E: enquiries@rrc.qld.gov.au
W: www.rrc.qld.gov.au

Connect with Council on social media

Food Essentials

Renewal Process for Food Business Licences

1. Renewal Stage

Food Business Licence renewals are issued to licensees every April. The renewal application must be fully completed and submitted to Council with the annual fee prior to 30 June of the same year. If the form is not fully completed or the annual fee is not paid, the application is considered to be not properly made and cannot be processed.

If your application is considered not properly made, correspondence will be sent to you advising why and you will have an opportunity to rectify any issues. If you fail to return a properly made application by the due date your Food Business Licence will expire and will proceed to the restoration stage.

2. Restoration Stage

The *Food Act 2006* allows a short period of time where the expired Food Business Licence can be restored. After 30 June all food businesses that have not renewed or have not provided a properly made application by the due date will be issued a Restoration Application. The restoration application must be fully completed and submitted to Council with the relevant fee by the due date. Correspondence will be sent to you if your application is considered not properly made. If you fail to return a properly made application and you continue to operate, you will progress to the Application for Food Business Licence stage.

3. Application for Food Business Licence Stage

Food businesses that have failed to renew or restore the Food Business Licence and continue to operate will be required to make an Application for Food Business Licence. Correspondence will be sent to you requesting an application. The Application for Food Business Licence must be fully completed and submitted to Council with the relevant fee and supporting documentation. Please note the application fees are substantially more than the renewal fee or restoration fee and approval is not guaranteed.

4. Legal Action

Food businesses that have failed to renew or restore their licence or make a new Application for Food Business Licence and continue to operate are committing an offence under the *Food Act 2006*. A final Improvement Notice will be issued to licensees requesting an application. Council will take legal action if an application is not received within the required timeframe.

In this issue…

- Renewal Process for Food Business Licences
- Cooling of Potentially Hazardous Food
- Use By and Best Before Dates
- Receiving of Incoming Food
- Food Safety Quiz
- Premise Maintenance
- Food Storage in Refrigerators
- Electronic Communication
- Washing Fruit & Vegetables
- Food Safety Websites

Renewal of Food Business Licence

Ensure your Food Business Licence is renewed by 30 June 2019. Food businesses that do not renew their licence by 30 June 2019 will face financial and possible legal consequences.

Have you made any changes?

Making structural changes to your food premise may require an amendment to your food business licence. If you are planning to renovate please ensure you discuss your proposal with an Environmental Health Officer to determine if an application is required. Any renovation must comply with the Food Safety Standards.

Cooling of Potentially Hazardous Food

A food business must, when cooling cooked, potentially hazardous food, cool the food from:

- 60°C to 21°C within two hours, and
- 21°C to 5°C within a further four hours.

The cooling of cooked potentially hazardous food needs to be as quick as possible to prevent the growth of bacteria.

If you store food in shallow containers and not overfill them it will cool more rapidly. If you don't know how fast your food is cooling, use a probe thermometer to measure the warmest part of the food which is usually in the centre. When using this method to cook and cool food appropriate records should be kept to demonstrate adequate control is in place.

Use By and Best Before Dates

Foods which have use by date are foods that must be eaten before a certain time for health or safety reasons. Foods should not be eaten after the use by date and can't legally be sold after this date because they may pose a health or safety risk.

Most foods have a best before date. You can still eat foods for a while after the best before date as they should be safe but they may have lost some quality. Foods that have a best before date can be legally sold after that date provided the food is fit for human consumption.

Foods that have a shelf life of two years or longer, e.g. some canned foods, do not need to be labelled with a best before date. This is because it is difficult to give the consumer an accurate guide as to how long these foods will keep, as they may retain their quality for many years and are likely to be consumed well before they spoil.

Receiving of Incoming Food

Food businesses must take all practicable measures to ensure they only receive food that is safe and suitable, including:

- Only accepting food that is protected from the likelihood of contamination,
- Being able to identify the received food and its supplier,
- Ensuring potentially hazardous food is under temperature control.

Food businesses can adopt the following tips for receiving incoming food:

- Arrange for the food to be delivered when someone is at the premises to inspect the food,
- Check that the food is at the correct temperature when it arrives,
- Check the best before or use by date on the food,
- Check the food packaging or covering is not damaged when it arrives.

Depending on your type of food business, it might be difficult to check every item of food at the time of delivery. However you should inspect the food received from your suppliers on a regular basis, particularly from suppliers whose products are potentially hazardous food. If food delivered to your food business is contaminated or you think it may be contaminated, do not accept it.

Food Safety Quiz

Test your knowledge with the following questions:

1. Foodborne illnesses are not caused by fruit and vegetables. True/False
2. Reheating food in a bain marie or hotbox is acceptable. True/False
3. When cooling cooked food for storage, you must cool it to 5°C within 6 hours. True/False
4. Freezing food kills any harmful bacteria that might cause foodborne illness. True/False
5. By looking at the colour you can tell if meat is properly cooked. True/False
6. You should rinse chicken to remove bacteria. True/False

Premise Maintenance

The Food Safety Standards require food businesses to ensure that fixtures, fittings and equipment are adequate for the production of safe and suitable food and fit for their intended use.

The Food Safety Standards also require that fixtures, fittings and equipment be designed, located and if necessary installed so that:

- There is no likelihood that they will cause food contamination;
- They are able to be easily and effectively cleaned;
- Adjacent floors, walls and ceilings and other surfaces are able to be easily and effectively cleaned;
- To the extent that is practicable, they do not provide harbourage for pests.

Equipment should be regularly checked to ensure that it meets these requirements, and must be repaired or replaced if it does not. Regular premise maintenance is vital to maintaining food safety. Premise maintenance can also be financially beneficial in the long term by preventing larger repair bills, lost operating time and lost revenue. Poor maintenance of a food premise and equipment can result in the following issues:

- Pests can enter the premise through holes and gaps in the walls, floors and ceilings or under gaps in damaged doors.
- Pests, once in the premise can hide in cracks and gaps in walls, floors and ceilings.
- Difficulty cleaning the premise and equipment without causing further damage.
- Difficulty cleaning the premise and equipment can result in an increase in accumulation of dirt and grime that can feed pests and grow microorganisms that can contaminate the food.
- Damaged equipment can result in physical contamination of food or a safety hazard for staff.
- Difficulties maintaining temperature control for hot and cold food storage units.

Always repair damage to a premise or equipment in a timely manner. Scheduling preventative maintenance for equipment can prevent break downs and reduce the risk of possible food contamination.

Food Storage in Refrigerators

If potentially hazardous food is not properly stored in a refrigerator it can lead to cross-contamination and the growth of bacteria that cause food-borne illness. When storing food using a refrigerator, ready-to-eat foods such as salads and desserts should always be stored above raw foods (unless the fridge has a dedicated vegetable draw). Raw foods such as meats, seafood, and poultry should be stored on a low shelf to ensure that any juices or liquids do not drip down and cross-contaminate other food. All cooked and ready-to-eat foods in the refrigerator should be stored in a sealed container or covered. When stocking a refrigerator new stock should be placed behind old stock to minimise food wastage. Use by dates should also be closely monitored to ensure food is safe for use.

Remember that refrigerators should be set at a temperature between 0-5°C to slow the food spoilage process and limit the growth of harmful bacteria. If you find the refrigerator temperature is too high, it may be the result of frequently opening the door, overloading, blocking of cooling units, or the thermostat being set too high. Actions should be taken to ensure the refrigerator remains at or below 5°C even when in regular use.