

SAFE FOOD STORAGE

Maintaining safe food storage practices is pivotal in preventing cross-contamination and ensuring the longevity of perishables, both inside and outside the fridge.

In the Fridge:

Organise by Zones: Allocate specific areas for different food types to prevent cross-contamination. Store raw meats on lower shelves to avoid potential drips onto ready-to-eat items.

Seal and Cover: Utilise airtight containers or plastic wraps to seal food items. This not only prevents odours from permeating but also inhibits the transfer of bacteria between items.

Check and Rotate: Regularly inspect and check expiration dates. Rotate items to use older products first, minimising waste and ensuring freshness.

Maintain Temperature: Keep the food in the refrigerator at or below 5°C to slow bacterial growth. Invest in a refrigerator thermometer to monitor and adjust as needed.

Outside the Fridge:

Dry and Cool Storage: Store non-perishables in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. Ensure adequate ventilation to prevent moisture build-up.

Use Shelving: Elevate items off the floor to promote air circulation. Consider open shelving for items like potatoes and onions that require ventilation.

Separate Cleaning Supplies: Keep cleaning products away from food storage areas. Store them in a designated space to avoid accidental contamination.

PLASTIC FREE CQ

Looking for a new way to get your sustainability noticed? Or, perhaps, you're not as sustainable as you'd like.

You can reduce your single-use plastic and waste and find solutions that work for you with help from Plastic Free Places CQ. See the enclosed flyer for further information.

EXHAUST CANOPIES

In any commercial kitchen, exhaust canopy filters play a pivotal role in maintaining a safe and efficient cooking environment. These filters not only trap grease and smoke, preventing them from entering ventilation systems but also contribute to fire prevention. It is crucial to have additional equipment, such as benchtop fryers, located strategically under these filters to maximise their effectiveness.

Regular inspections and cleaning of exhaust canopy filters are imperative. Grease build-up poses not only a fire hazard but also compromises the efficiency of the ventilation system. Filters should be checked at regular intervals and cleaned to ensure optimal performance.

Equally important is the practice of always keeping the filters in place during cooking. This not only ensures the effectiveness of the filtration system but also prevents the escape of grease and smoke into the kitchen, maintaining a safe and comfortable working environment. In adhering to these practices, kitchen operators uphold safety standards, reduce fire risks, and create a healthier and more efficient workspace for their staff.



INSPECTIONS

Please be aware that Environmental Health Officers are not required to make appointments to conduct inspections of your food business. Under the *Food Act 2006* Environmental Health Officers are allowed to enter your food business whenever it is open to the public or conducting food handling.

Food Essentials

Food Safety Standard 3.2.2A

Changes have recently been made to the Food Standards Code. Late last year, Council sent a letter to local food businesses that are directly affected by these changes.

The following requirements are now in place for food businesses that handle unpackaged potentially hazardous food that is ready to eat:

- All food handlers must complete basic food safety training.
- Food Safety Supervisors must have a Statement of Attainment obtained in the last 5 years.
- The food business must be able to substantiate key food safety controls (category one businesses only).

Council provides free basic food safety training on our website, just search for 'I'm Alert Food Safety' on the homepage. You can also access record keeping templates through the website – these are one of the best ways to show that you have key food safety controls in place.

If you need to complete a Food Safety Supervisor course, you can find several training providers through an online search. You will need to confirm that the course offered includes the correct units. Alternatively, you can visit www.training.gov.au and search for the competency codes directly.

The training competencies for Food Safety Supervisors in the retail and hospitality sector are:

National Competency Code	Competency Title
SITXFSA005	Use hygienic practices for food safety
SITXFSA006	Participate in safe food handling practices
OR	
SIRRFSA001	Handle food safely in a retail environment

If you work in the health and community services sector there are different training competencies:

National Competency Code	Competency Title
HLTFSE001	Follow basic food safety practices
HLTFSE007	Oversee the day-to-day implementation of food safety in the workplace
HLTFSE005	Apply and monitor food safety requirements

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HAVE YOU MADE ANY CHANGES?

Making structural changes to your food premises 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.

DISPOSAL OF FOOD WASTE

Businesses that prepare and sell food have a responsibility to dispose of food waste safely. Food waste that contains or that has come into contact with animal material from mammals or birds (meat, eggs), potentially poses a risk to Australian biosecurity if not disposed of correctly. This type of food waste is known as ‘swill’.

Swill cannot be fed to pigs or poultry. This applies to all pigs and poultry, including pets and those owned by hobby farmers. Food waste that directly contains animal material also cannot be fed to ruminants (cows, sheep, goats, etc.)

Organisms that cause animal disease can survive in food waste. Food preparation processes do not always destroy all pathogens, so animals eating food that contains or has been in contact with animal material may be exposed to these pathogens and a disease outbreak can result.

Preventing ruminants, pigs, and poultry from having access to contaminated food waste is the key. Use a licensed waste disposal contractor as this ensures the waste is collected and transported in a manner that keeps it contained and prevents it being exposed to animals.



A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

In recent months Council has received several complaints relating to customer areas at food businesses, such as dining spaces and bathrooms. Customers will form an opinion on the hygiene practices of the business based on the areas they can see, so it is important to maintain all areas of your food business in a clean state. A cleaning schedule can be a good way to keep track of which areas need attention. It can also help to walk through your business and view it from a customer's perspective.

CHILDREN IN THE WORKPLACE

With the ever-increasing cost of living, people may be looking for ways to cut down on childcare fees. You can have your young children accompany you to the workplace if you take some measures to protect food. This guidance is also relevant for home-based businesses with young children.

- Children must stay out of areas with exposed food or surfaces likely to come into contact with food.
- Ensure food stored in containers is out of reach.
- Wash your hands before returning to food preparation after any break.

LUNCHTIME ACTIVITIES

There are some activities that shouldn't take place in food handling areas. Food handlers are not permitted to spit, smoke, vape, or chew tobacco in food-handling areas. Smoking within non-residential buildings is prohibited – you'll need to be more than 5m from the building entrance to smoke.

Staff members must wash their hands immediately after smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking, or using tobacco or similar substances. All these actions can make hands highly contaminated with bodily excretions that can contain pathogens that can cause foodborne illness if they are transferred to food, so washing hands is essential.

SINKS

Food handlers must only wash their hands in the nominated hand washing sink, and not in sinks that are used for other purposes. Other sinks must not be used for hand washing because:

- The sink may become contaminated from hand washing and then transfer pathogens to food; for example, if a food preparation sink is used for hand washing.
- Hands may become contaminated from material in the sink; for example, if a sink used for liquid waste is used for hand washing.

FOOD SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ☑ Food Business Licence displayed in public view
- ☑ Cold food stored below 5°C
- ☑ Hot food is stored above 60°C OR
- ☑ Hot food held using the “2-hour 4-hour rule”:
 - If it’s been in the temperature danger zone (5°C -60°C) for less than 2 hours, it can be put back in the fridge and kept.
 - If it’s been longer than two hours, you can keep it until 4 hours, but then you must throw it away.
 - You must be able to show there is a system in place to keep track how long food has been kept.
- ☑ Cooked then cooled potentially hazardous food is:
 - Cooled down from 60°C to 21°C within 2 hours.
 - Cooled down from 21°C to 5°C within a further 4 hours.
- ☑ Food reheated to hot hold is heated quickly to 60°C

FOODBORNE ILLNESSES

Foodborne illnesses can have serious consequences, making it crucial for workers to be aware of symptoms and take appropriate action. Common symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever. If workers suspect they have a foodborne illness, they should notify their supervisor immediately and refrain from handling food.

Timely reporting is essential to prevent the spread of contamination. Workers with symptoms such as vomiting, or diarrhea should be excluded from the workplace until they are symptom-free for at least 48 hours. This exclusion period helps ensure that individuals are no longer contagious and reduces the risk of infecting co-workers and customers.

Common agents causing foodborne illnesses include bacteria such as Salmonella and Escherichia coli (E. coli), viruses like Norovirus, and parasites such as Giardia. These pathogens often contaminate food through improper handling, undercooking, or cross-contamination.

Maintaining personal hygiene, proper food handling practices, and regular handwashing are crucial preventive measures.

PEST CONTROL TIPS

DIY Pest Control:

- **Seal Entry Points:** Conduct a thorough inspection to identify and seal potential entry points for pests. Use caulk or weather stripping to close gaps around windows, doors, and pipes.
- **Sanitation Practices:** Regularly clean and sanitise food preparation areas. Eliminate potential food sources that may attract pests, such as crumbs or spills.

Vigilance Reminders:

- **Routine Inspections:** Conduct routine inspections of entry points, including doors, windows, and vents. Repair any damage promptly to prevent pest entry.
- **Landscaping Maintenance:** Trim vegetation and trees near the premises, as overgrown plants can serve as pathways for pests.

CHOPPING BOARDS

Chopping boards are essential tools in any kitchen, but their effectiveness hinges on proper cleaning and maintenance practices. Regular upkeep not only ensures a clean and sanitary workspace but also extends the life of the chopping boards.

It's crucial to clean chopping boards immediately after each use. Use hot, soapy water and a brush to scrub away any food particles or residue. Sanitising the boards with a Food Grade Sanitiser or a mild bleach solution further eliminates bacteria.

Color-coded boards for different food types aid in preventing cross-contamination. Regularly inspect boards for deep cuts or grooves that could harbor bacteria, replacing them when necessary.

