



# Food Safety Advice for Home Caterers



Renfrewshire  
Council

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## Introduction

It is becoming more common for people to run a food business from their own home. But there are many things which need to be taken into consideration.

As the person preparing or handling the food, it is your responsibility to make sure your food does not make people ill.

This booklet has been written to help you with these responsibilities, and to make you aware of the laws and regulations you have to follow.

It also contains some advice on good practice regarding food hygiene, storage and cleaning.

We hope you will find this booklet informative and useful.

**Community Resources**  
**Renfrewshire Council**

> Part One:

## Points you should consider...

## Food Safety Law

If you intend to run your own catering business, you must comply with the Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006, and with Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

These regulations lay down the requirements for personnel involved in the handling of food, the methods and practices used in food businesses and structural matters in food premises. For your own protection and your customer's safety it is essential you comply with the regulations.

The laws on food safety apply the same to a business run from home as they do to commercial premises. You will receive regular inspections by Enforcement Officers from the council's Community Resources, and you may face legal action if you are found to be breaking food hygiene laws.

This also applies if you use a kitchen somewhere else to prepare food, such as a village hall kitchen. It is strongly recommended you talk to an Environmental Health Officer before starting your business. You can contact them on **0300 300 0380**.

You may also need to meet the requirements of the Food Labelling Regulations 1996. These regulations state that all pre-packed foods must be labelled with certain information relating to ingredients, name of producer, use-by and best-before dates etc.



## Registration

Your home will have to be registered with the council as a food business. This is free, and there is only one simple registration form to fill in, but it is a legal requirement. Contact us on **0300 300 0380** for the form, or fill in and submit it electronically at **[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk)**.

## Planning Permission

You may need planning permission to run a business from home, so take advice from the council's Development and Housing Services. They can be contacted on **0300 300 0144**, or by emailing **[pt@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:pt@renfrewshire.gov.uk)**.

## Business Rates

You may have to pay increased rates if you use part of your property for a business. Contact the Finance and IT Dept. on **0300 300 0202**, or email **[ndr.finit@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:ndr.finit@renfrewshire.gov.uk)** to find out more about Business Rates.

## Insurance

Just in case things go wrong, we recommend you take out insurance to cover claims against you (third-party insurance). This can be quite expensive. You should consult your solicitor or insurance agent about this.

## Restrictive Covenants

With some older properties, you may find the deeds contain clauses preventing you from carrying out certain activities. Running a food business may be one of them. You should consult your solicitor about this.

## Mortgage Restrictions

If you have a mortgage on your property, you must contact your lender and talk to them about your plans.

## Food Hygiene training

Before you take on the tasks of a home caterer, you must make sure you have a good knowledge of food hygiene — at least the REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene Course or equivalent. One of the main requirements of the law is that all food handlers must know enough about food safety to allow them to work safely.

Local REHIS food hygiene courses are run regularly by:

- Reid Kerr College, Renfrew Road, Paisley PA3 4DR (Tel: 0800 052 7343)
- City of Glasgow College, 60 North Hanover St. Glasgow G1 2BP (Tel: 0141 566 6222)
- Cardonald College, Mossbank Drive, Glasgow G52 3AY (Tel: 0141 272 0616)

For details of other trainers/courses, contact The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland by calling **0131 229 2968**, emailing **[contact@rehis.com](mailto:contact@rehis.com)**, or visiting **[www.rehis.com](http://www.rehis.com)**.



## Do I need a new kitchen?

This depends on which foods you are preparing and how much food you are producing. Domestic kitchens are not designed for commercial use and so might need some alteration to comply with the food safety laws.

The best way to find out is to contact us and allow an Enforcement Officer to call before you decide to start your business. They will help and advise you at no cost.

## The need for written records

Like other food businesses, you will have to keep some written records on your policies and procedures to demonstrate that you produce safe food. This is called your Safe Food Management System. Your Enforcement Officer will be able to give you a handbook to help you with this.



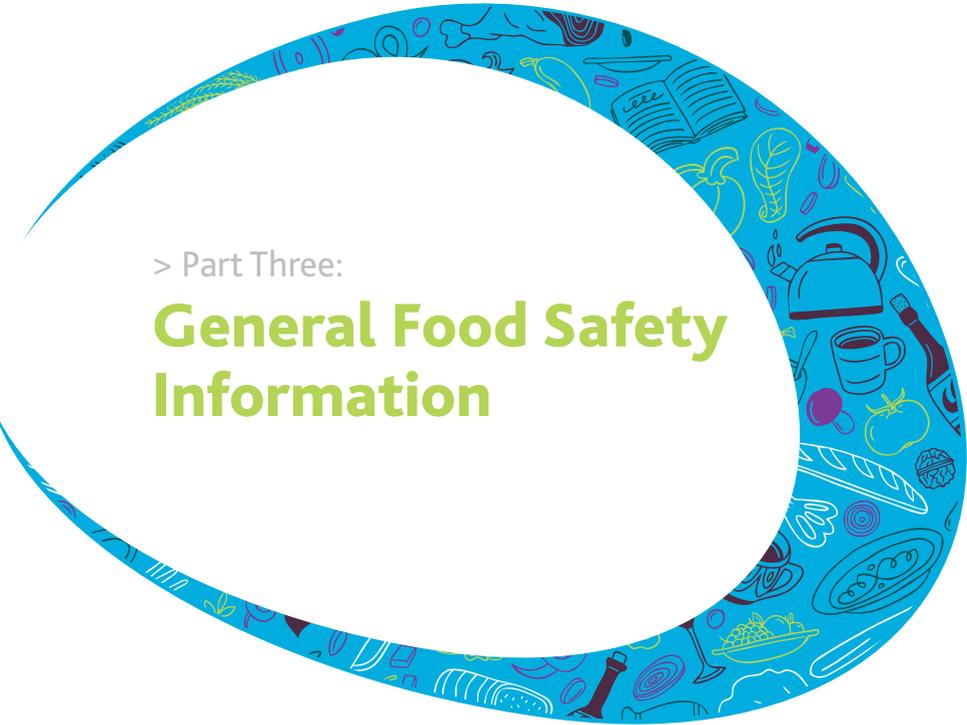


> Part Two:

## Things you must have in your home...

- A wash-hand basin must be available which is used for hand washing only.
- Toilets or bathrooms must not open directly on to the kitchen.
- You should buy a probe thermometer which you can use to check fridge, freezer and food temperatures.
- Decorative finishes which are not easily cleanable, such as wood, are not allowed.
- You must ensure all equipment, e.g. fridges and freezers, is up to the standard required for commercial use.
- You need to ensure you have enough storage and refrigeration space for large volumes of food.
- Make sure you have adequate ventilation to prevent condensation, mould growth and damage to decoration.
- You need to ensure your kitchen is kept free from flies, ants and other sources of contamination.
- You need to ensure you have adequate space and worktops to prevent cross contamination, by having a separate area for raw meat preparation, and another area for preparation of ready-to-eat foods.
- You need to ensure a double sink, or a single sink and suitable dishwasher, are available for washing utensils.
- You need to ensure family use of the kitchen is separate from business use. Although this can be awkward, it is essential for good food hygiene.

In general, we recommend any business which intends to prepare food in anything more than very small quantities should be operating from properly designed and equipped commercial premises. This is because it is very difficult to achieve the standards of hygiene required by law in a domestic kitchen.



> Part Three:

## General Food Safety Information

**This section has been written to provide advice on good practice regarding various aspects of food preparation, including storage, hygiene and cooking.**

### Storage

- Ensure you have a clean, dry area for storage of ingredients.
- Decant bagged dried goods into lidded containers.
- Check food labels for storage instructions. Always rotate your stock, and use the 'first in first out' method.
- You may need to re-label items which have had the original packaging removed.
- Store unwashed vegetables separately, and well away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Eggs should be stored in the fridge and used within their best-before date.
- Store food in fridges at below 5°C. Store food in freezers at -18°C.
- Ensure you have the fridge and freezer capacity needed to keep food cool and safe. Domestic fridges are not designed to cope with the large amounts of food and may struggle to keep the correct temperature. Check fridge temperatures daily with a probe thermometer.
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat food separate. Raw meat, poultry and fish must be kept at the bottom of fridges and freezers. This is to prevent any drips contaminating ready-to-eat foods.

- Don't clutter up the fridge with alcohol and soft drinks. They do not need to be refrigerated. Maximise the available fridge space for perishable items.
- You should keep food you prepare and ingredients for your business separate from your domestic food. This could be a separate cupboard, separate shelves in fridges, or separate compartments in a freezer.

## Temperature control

- The coldest part of your fridge should be between **0°C and 5°C**. Use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature regularly.
- Keep the fridge door closed as much as possible. Leaving the fridge door open raises the temperature.
- Prepare food that needs to be kept in the fridge last. Don't leave it standing around at room temperature. Leaving ready-to-eat food at room temperature for a long time can allow harmful bacteria to grow.
- Cooked foods which need to be chilled should be cooled as quickly as possible, preferably within an hour. Avoid putting them in the fridge until they are cool, because this will raise the temperature of the fridge.
- To cool food quickly, place it in the coolest place you can find — often not in the kitchen. Another way is to put the food in a clean, sealable container and put it under a running cold water tap or in a basin of cold water, or use ice packs in cool bags. Where practical, reduce cooling times by dividing foods into smaller amounts.

- Once the food is prepared, getting it to where the function is being held can be a problem. This can be particularly difficult when there are large quantities of perishable food involved. Use cool boxes.
- You will also need to check the facilities at the place where the function is being held are adequate for keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- **Hot foods must be kept to at 63°C or above.**
- **If you are reheating foods they must be heated to a temperature of 82°C.**

## Cooking

- Cooking food thoroughly is the key to killing most of the harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. It is recommended the core temperature reaches a **minimum of 75°C**.
- Large joints of meat or whole poultry are more difficult to prepare safely, so take care with them.
- Make sure meat and poultry are fully thawed before cooking or expected cooking times might not be long enough.
- Food must be defrosted in the fridge or microwave. It must not be left at room temperature to defrost.
- Domestic ovens may not have the capacity to handle the amounts of food needed to be cooked for functions, particularly if large joints of meat and whole poultry are involved.
- Make sure cooked food is not reheated more than once.

- Don't be tempted to cut cooking times just because people are waiting to eat. This is particularly important when microwaving or barbequing.
- Take proper care with leftovers. Throw away any perishable foods that have been standing at room temperature for more than a couple of hours, and throw away any food scraps.
- Raw eggs should not be used in anything that won't be thoroughly cooked, such as icing or mousse.

## Cross contamination

- It is important to separate raw and ready to eat food at all times. Raw food includes uncooked meat and meat products, poultry, fish, eggs and unwashed vegetables. If raw food is allowed to touch or drip onto ready-to-eat food, harmful bacteria can be transferred. This is called cross-contamination and is a major cause of food poisoning.
- When preparing raw foods be aware that bacteria can be spread by hands, cloths, knives and chopping boards, so make sure these are washed/disinfected thoroughly after use.
- Prepare raw food and ready-to-eat food separately. If possible, have a designated area for raw food preparation only.
- Wash and disinfect all food contact surfaces including utensils, boards, storage containers, work tops, crockery and cutlery.

## Personal hygiene

- Wash hands regularly with warm water and soap to keep them clean. Always wash hands before touching food, after using the toilet, after touching pets or the bin, and when they look dirty.
- Hands should also be washed frequently while preparing food and **always after touching raw food**.
- If you have any cuts or grazes on exposed areas, make sure these are kept covered with a waterproof dressing. You should use blue plasters.
- Avoid catering if you are unwell, particularly if you have food poisoning or diarrhoea. You should wait until you have been free of all symptoms for at least 48 hours before preparing food for your business.
- Keep anyone who is ill, or has been recently ill, out of the kitchen, even if they are not handling food.
- Smoking must not be allowed in the kitchen.
- You should wear clean, washable overalls when preparing food.

## Cleaning

- Before preparing any food, you must clean the kitchen or food preparation area and clear it of all unnecessary items.
- For cleaning food contact surfaces or equipment/utensils use a **bactericidal detergent** or **sanitiser** to disinfect rather than domestic washing-up liquid, and/or ensure your dishwasher is operating effectively.



- Use the 'two-stage' cleaning method. This involves a 'pre-clean' to remove food debris, a main clean/disinfect, and then a rinse. Air drying is preferable.
- Disinfectants that you use should meet the BS EN 1276 or BS EN 13697 standard. Check the labels.
- Work surfaces and cutting boards should be thoroughly washed and disinfected before food preparation begins.
- Keep dishcloths clean and change them frequently. Use disposable paper roll and disposable hand towels where possible.
- All domestic pets must be kept out of the kitchen while food is being prepared and ideally at all other times too.
- No laundry should be undertaken while food is being prepared. Ideally washing machines should be located outside of food preparation rooms. Laundry that you need for catering, overalls, aprons etc. should be washed separately from domestic laundry.
- If you have young children or toddlers, keep them out of the kitchen while you are preparing food for your business.

## Vulnerable groups

- Take extra care if you are preparing food for babies, toddlers, pregnant women, older people and anyone who is ill as food poisoning bacteria can make them very ill. The illness that these groups suffer is often more severe and can be life-threatening.
- These groups should avoid pate and soft ripened cheeses — such as brie, camembert and blue-vein types. These foods may contain *Listeria*, which can cause illness.

## Allergies

- Be aware that some customers may have allergies. You may have to think about clearly labelling foods. For an up-to-date list of food allergens, and for general advice on hygiene and labelling matters visit the Food Standards Agency website at **[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)**.

## Additives

- Recent research has suggested that eating or drinking certain mixes of Sunset yellow (E110), Quinoline yellow (E104), Carmoisine (E122), Allura red (E129), Tartrazine (E102) and Ponceau 4R (E124) — together with the preservative sodium benzoate, could be linked to hyperactivity in children. You may want to check your ingredients and avoid these additives. Check the Food Standards Agency website **[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)** for more information.

## Cake decorations

- Ensure any cake decorations you use, such as dusts and glitters, are edible (usually made from starch), as there are some available on the market which may not be made from edible ingredients. Even though they state 'non-toxic' they will be regarded as food contaminants. Check the labels.

## Transport of food

- You will have to show that you can transport foods at safe temperatures, either hot or cold. You may need to invest in insulated carriers, ice packs etc.



## Further information is available from...

Community Resources  
Renfrewshire Council  
Renfrewshire House  
Cotton Street  
Paisley  
PA1 1BR  
**Tel:** 0300 300 0380  
**Email:** [b-serv.es@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:b-serv.es@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

## Useful website links...

[www.renfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk)  
[www.rehis.com](http://www.rehis.com)  
[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)



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