

CATERING FROM HOME

Running a business from home is becoming more popular. However when food is involved a range of issues need to be considered before starting out.

The legislation on food safety applies just the same to a business run from home as to any commercial premises. Firstly the food business operator (FBO) will have to register the food premises with the Environmental Health Department. This is free! If you prepare high-risk food such as meat or poultry dishes your home will be frequently inspected by an Environmental Health Officer. If preparing only low risk foods such as cakes or muffins inspections will be less often.

IS YOUR KITCHEN ADEQUATE FOR A CATERING BUSINESS?

The kitchen must be designed and constructed in a manner that allows it to be kept clean and maintained in a good state of repair. Any surface that comes into contact with food must be smooth, impervious, readily cleansable and easy to maintain

A suitable sink with hot and cold water must be provided to wash utensils and equipment. Preferably this would be a deep double sink with drainer that allow the equipment to be suitably washed and rinsed with the final rinse water containing a food safe sanitizer e.g. Milton.

A well maintained dishwasher will be acceptable. If a sink is to be used for food washing it must be cleaned and sanitized between each use.

AVOIDING CROSS CONTAMINATION

It is important to separate cooked and uncooked food at all times. If raw food (e.g. meat, poultry or fish) is allowed to touch or drip onto ready-to-eat food, harmful bacteria can be transferred onto the ready-to-eat food. It is recommended to have two chill units one for uncooked food and one for cooked foods. This lessens the risk of any cross contamination. **These units should only be used to store food used for the food business.**

Prepare raw and ready-to-eat food separately. Do not use the same knives or chopping boards for raw meat/fish, ready-to-eat food and raw fruit/vegetables unless they are cleaned and sanitised between uses. Colour coded boards and knives are recommended for example: - red boards and knives for raw red meats; blue boards and knives for fish/shellfish; yellow boards and knives for poultry.

All possible sources of contamination must be removed from the kitchen prior to it being used for food preparation. Possible sources of contamination are numerous. Your Environmental Health Officer (EHO) will be able to advise you.

Keep people (including children) not involved in commercial food preparation out of the kitchen during preparation time. Pet animals **must** be kept out of the kitchen during commercial food preparation. Ensure that all work surfaces, equipment, cutting boards etc. are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before use. All items that come into contact with food such as chopping boards, food containers, packaging etc. must be commercial food grade.

Domestic activities (such as washing clothes) must not be carried out during food preparation times. No one must smoke in the kitchen at any time when handling food. If anyone in the house is suffering from diarrhoea and / or vomiting than you must consult your GP immediately and cease commercial food preparation.

HAND WASHING

Thorough hand washing is the most important in reducing the spread of infection.

Hands must be washed frequently with warm water and soap. The use of single use disposable paper towels and a soap that contains a non-fragrant anti-bacterial agent is advised. Hand washing should take place before preparing food, between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods, after using the toilet and after touching the dustbin or any other possible source of contamination.

Domestic kitchens are not usually fitted with a separate wash hand basin, which is a major requirement of the law. Arrangements must therefore be made to enable food handlers to wash their hands. A wash hand basin in a downstairs cloakroom will be acceptable provided it has paper towels and an antibacterial soap. A hand gel that contains an antibacterial agent and does not require the use of water can be used in the kitchen.

ENOUGH COLD STORAGE SPACE

Commercial food preparation at home means large quantities of cooked and uncooked food competing for limited amounts of fridge and freezer space. Inappropriate storage is one of the most common faults reported as contributing to food poisoning outbreaks.

High-risk food must be kept at or below 8°C (recommend below 5°C). It is recommended to keep commercial food in a separate fridge or freezer and not amongst your own food for domestic use.

COOKING FACILITIES

Domestic ovens may not have the capacity to handle the amounts of food that need to be cooked, particularly if large joints of meat and whole poultry are involved. Cooked food should reach a temperature of 75°C for 30 seconds. To ensure this you will require a digital probe thermometer to help you check and ensure that the **core** temperature reaches a minimum of 75°C.

TRANSPORTING HIGH-RISK FOOD

Once the food is prepared, getting it to where the customer is located can be a problem. It is extremely important when transporting food that it is protected from any risk of contamination and high risk food is maintained at a temperature less than 8°C. If you do

not have a refrigerated vehicle you can use cool boxes that contain cool packs. Ensure that they are correctly packed to allow even distribution of the cold air. These must be cleansed and sanitized between each use.

A DOCUMENTED FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

All businesses that prepare and provide high-risk food must have a documented food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP (hazard analysis critical control points).

The Food Standards Agency have developed a pack called Safer Food Better Business to help you meet this requirement. Go to their website www.food.gov.uk

The packs are free and can be ordered direct from the Food Standards Agency:

Telephone 0845 606 0667

Email foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk.

FOOD HYGIENE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All food handlers, before starting work must have written or verbal instruction in the essentials of food hygiene. If you are handling 'high risk' foods it is recommended you attend a level 2 course but on-line training from an accredited course is acceptable for low risk food preparation. Contact www.cieh.org.uk for a list of accredited on line trainers. Relevant prior experience may be good enough to meet this requirement. This can be discussed with your Environmental Health Officer.

OTHER THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED TO CONSIDER

Planning Permission

You may need planning permission to run a business from home, so take advice from the Council's Planning Department. Contact our helpline on 01372 732000

**Please note that being registered as a food business with the Environmental Health department does not constitute planning permission.

Business Rates

You may have to pay increased rates if you use part of your property for a business. You should take advice from the Council's Tax and Business Rates Department. Contact our helpline on 01372 732000

Insurance

Just in case things go wrong, you are strongly advised to take out insurance to cover claims against you. You should consult an insurance advisor about this.

Business Growth

Consideration must be given to acquiring commercial premises if it is your intention to expand your business. Lots of existing establishments have large fully functional kitchens that are not being used daily such as churches, village halls and sports clubs.

Labelling

If you are not selling to the final consumer (for example through a local grocery shop) we suggest you contact Trading Standards on 01372 371700 or email tradingstandards@surreycc.gov.uk

CONTACT

If you require any further information on food safety, contact the environmental health team on 01372 732000 or email ehpublichealth@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

FINALLY - IF YOU CAN'T DO IT SAFELY DON'T DO IT AT ALL.

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