

Health and Safety

for congregations

Food safety for congregations in NSW

How this guide can help you

Food and hospitality are an important aspect of life for our congregations. Food can however be potentially dangerous if it is not handled correctly. Bacteria in food can multiply and make us unwell or can trigger an allergic reaction in some people. Vulnerable people, such as the elderly, children and those that suffer from allergies (such as anaphylaxis) are at higher risk. Following these simple steps when handling food can help keep everyone in your congregation safe.

Food safety tips

Keep it cold

- Keep food below 5 ° C
- Put food that needs to be kept cold in the fridge straight away
- Don't eat food that's meant to be in the fridge if it has been left out for 2 hours or more
- Defrost foods in the fridge, especially meats
- If potentially hazardous foods (see below for definition) need to be cooled, the temperature should be reduced as quickly as possible
- To freeze potentially hazardous food safely, place foods in shallow containers in the freezer

Keep it hot

- It is recommended to cook foods to at least 75 ° C
- Reheat foods to at least 75 ° C
- If you are keeping food hot (i.e. in a bain-marie) the food needs to remain at 75 ° C or hotter
- Make sure there is no pink left in cooked meats, such as poultry
- Look for clear juices before serving chicken
- Heat all marinades to boiling if they contain raw meat juices
- Consider using a food thermometer if heating foods regularly

Keep it clean

- Wash hands thoroughly before starting to prepare food. Our handwashing instructions can be found [here](#)
- Keep benches, kitchen equipment and tableware clean and dry
- Don't let raw meat juices contaminate other food
- Separate raw and cooked food and use different cutting boards and knives
- Don't make food for others if you are unwell
- Utensils and equipment must be thoroughly washed in warm soapy water and dried with a clean tea towel

Check the food label

- Don't eat food past a 'use-by' date
- Note the best before date
- Follow storage and cooking instructions
- Be allergy aware and avoid using foods containing serious allergens
- Ask for information about unpackaged goods

Other

- Discourage left-overs from being stored in communal fridges. Throw away food that is not dated and labelled



The above foods or ingredients are the most common causes of allergies and anaphylaxis in Australia

Food labels and allergens

Some foods and ingredients can cause severe allergic reactions including anaphylaxis. Declaring allergens can therefore be important. If someone asks, it is important to be able to provide the following information;

- Name of the food
- Information about potential allergens
- Nutritional information panels

While it is not required, it is good practice to label foods containing allergens to ensure people can make safe food choices.

Selling food for a fundraising event

If you sell food at a fundraising event for a community or charitable cause you are not typically required to notify the local council or have a food safety supervisor (as required by food laws for other businesses) as long as you are selling food that:

- Doesn't need to be kept hot or refrigerated to keep it safe (i.e. potentially hazardous)
- Will be eaten immediately after thorough cooking

Maintaining food safety for those who will eat the food is still very important.

Examples of potentially hazardous food:

- Raw or cooked meats including poultry or game
- Foods containing raw or cooked meat such as casseroles, curries, lasagne
- Smallgoods such as ham or chicken loaf
- Dairy products such as milk, custard, dairy desserts, unbaked cheesecake or custard tarts
- Seafood
- Processed fruit and vegetables
- Cooked pasta and rice
- Foods containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein-rich foods
- Foods containing the above foods such as sandwiches, rolls, uncooked and cooked pizza

These sorts of meals have significant safety issues, such as temperature control, thorough cooking, cross-contamination and storage. Where possible these foods should be avoided. If this is not possible, notification to council can allow investigators to (if required) to assess risks and trace the source of a possible foodborne illness outbreak. A foodborne illness outbreak in the community may need to be reported. Click [here](#) for more information.

Training and supervision

People who are preparing food to be sold to raise money for charitable purposes do not require specific cooking or food handling skills, nor do they need to have a designated food safety supervisor when the food:

- Does not need to be kept hot or refrigerated to keep it safe (i.e. does not meet the definition of a potentially hazardous food)
- It is cooked and eaten immediately.

Where food does meet this criteria, food handlers need to have practical skills and knowledge appropriate to the type of food they are preparing.

Further details on food safety courses (which are optional) can however be obtained by contacting a local TAFE provider.

Providing food for free or donating food

Donating food can be an important way we help those around us. It is however important we follow food safety standards to ensure the food is safe and to ensure we are legally protected.

To ensure food is safe to donate:

- Ensure food is safe to eat when it leaves your possession
- Provide any information that is relevant for food handling and for safe consumption to the recipient
- Check and throw away any food that is past the use-by-date. Food that has passed the best before date can be donated if it is not damaged, deteriorated or perished
- Check the food for spoilage and ensure food labels are legible. Add food labels (where possible) to ensure the recipient can make safe food choices
- Observe temperature control requirements, and be sure to let the recipient know if there are any specific instructions
- Observe safe food practices

Food and children's services

There are additional responsibilities for children's services such as long day care, occasional care and employer sponsored child care. Under the food regulations services, other activities, such as Sunday School however do not meet these definitions. Children's services that prepare and serve meals and snacks must prepare, store and serve food safely. A food safety program in New South Wales is voluntary, however completing the attached template can ensure you are meeting your legal requirements. A food safety template is found [here](#). Click [here](#) to access a food safety tip sheet.

