

Advice for Home Caterers

Considerations and implications in
running a food business from home



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Can I run a business from home?

We are often asked "can I run a food business from home?"

Although in theory the answer to this question is "Yes", there are many serious considerations and implications with running a food business from home.

As the person preparing or handling the food, it is your responsibility to make sure that your food does not make people ill. Food poisoning is a miserable and potentially dangerous experience and can in some cases be fatal.

You will need to take extra care if you are catering for events that any young children, pregnant women, older people or anyone ill may be attending.

You will need to comply with current food law which lays down the requirements relating to persons engaged in the handling of food, the methods and practices used in food businesses and the structure of your food premises.

For your own protection and your customer's safety it is essential that you comply with food law. If you do not comply you may be guilty of an offence and liable to prosecution and more unfortunately you may sell your customers contaminated food.

In addition you must also 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, sell by dates etc. Further information is available from Trading Standards.

Things you need to consider

Registration

Your home will have to be registered with the Food team at the Council as a food business. This is free, and there is only one simple form to fill in, but it is a legal requirement. You could be prosecuted if you do not register. You should register your business with us 28 days before starting your business. Contact us on 01362 656870 to request a form or download a copy of our form from our website at www.breckland.gov.uk/content/food-registration

Planning Permission

You may need planning permission to run a business from home, or building regulation approval (if you are carrying out certain building works), so take advice from the planning and building department of the council. Contact them on 01362 656873 or planning@breckland.gov.uk. You can always ask for advice in writing by completing a request for pre-application planning advice

www.breckland.gov.uk/content/request-pre-application-planning-advice.

Business Rates

You may have to pay increased rates if you use part of your property for a business. Contact the Revenues Section of the council on 01362 656871 or email nndr@angliarevenues.gov.uk

Insurance

We strongly recommend you to take out adequate insurance. This can be quite expensive. You should consult your insurance agent about this.

Restrictive covenants

In some properties you may find that the deeds/letting agreement contain clauses that prevent you from carrying out certain activities. Running a food business may be one of them. You should consult your own solicitor about this.

Mortgage Restrictions

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

Help and Advice for Start-Ups

For more information please visit www.breckland.gov.uk/content/help-and-advice-start-ups



Food Safety Law

The laws on food safety apply in the same way if a business is run from home as to a commercial premises. You will receive regular inspections by officers from the Council's Food, Health and Safety team, 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, for example a village or community hall kitchen.

The main pieces of legislation are:

- Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013
- Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004
- Regulation (EC) 178/2002 and
- General Food Regulations 2004

It is strongly recommended that you talk to a member of the Food, Health & Safety Team outlining your intentions before starting your business. You can contact us on 01362 656870 or by e-mail to foodandhealth&safety@breckland.gov.uk

Health and Safety

If you intend to employ additional staff or if the public will have access to your property you will need to be aware of health and safety responsibilities, additional information is available on our website: www.breckland.gov.uk/content/health-and-safety

Training

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. This usually means undertaking a training course in food hygiene, at a level which is appropriate to the type of food being prepared. We can offer advice about what level of training you would need. If you would like to attend one of our food hygiene courses please visit the training section on our website:

www.breckland.gov.uk/content/breckland-and-south-norfolk-food-safety-training/

Here you can download the Council's current year Food Safety Training Programme which lists the courses on offer, as well as training dates and venue locations. If food handlers do not have any formal training then they must receive adequate instruction and/or supervision.

Your Kitchen

Domestic kitchens are not designed for commercial use and so might need some alteration to comply with the food safety laws. The standards you will have to meet depend upon a number of factors such as the type and quantity of food you intend to prepare, and what else the kitchen is used for.

The advice given in this booklet provides generic advice and it is your responsibility to make sure you meet the necessary legal requirements,

In general, we recommend that 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.

Common problems with domestic kitchens include:

- A readily accessible wash hand basin must be available which is used only for hand washing.
- Ensuring there are sufficient sinks for cleaning equipment and washing food.
- Toilets or bathrooms must not open directly on to the kitchen.
- You need to ensure that you have adequate space, worktops and separate equipment utensils to prevent cross contamination. Raw and ready to eat foods must be strictly segregated/separated and it is recommended you have colour coded equipment which is designated.
- Decorative finishes and work surfaces which are not easily cleanable.
- You must ensure all equipment is up to the standard required for commercial use e.g. fridges and freezers.
- You need to ensure you have enough storage and refrigeration space for the volumes of food you intend to produce.
- Make sure you have adequate ventilation, lighting and drainage.
- You need to ensure that family use of the kitchen ie by children, pets or other people is separate from business use. Also you will need to make sure other domestic activities (such as laundry) do not compromise food safety. Although this can be awkward it is essential for good food hygiene.
- You need to ensure that your kitchen is kept free from pests, rodents and other sources of contamination.

Keeping Food Safe

A very wide range of foods can cause food poisoning if not handled properly.

- Raw meat and raw eggs may contain food poisoning bacteria. Undercooked poultry and eggs can result in food poisoning.
- Sauces and desserts that contain uncooked or lightly cooked raw eggs, such as mousses and homemade ice creams, may cause problems too.
- Meat, meat products and shellfish have also been identified as the cause of illness in food poisoning outbreaks.
- Raw salad and vegetables e.g. lettuce, tomatoes etc that will be eaten uncooked. Make sure these are thoroughly washed and chilled prior to consumption.
- Make sure you use reputable suppliers and have full traceability in place.

Some of the most common errors that may lead to food poisoning are:

- Poor storage
- Inappropriate temperature control
- Inadequate cleaning
- Not separating raw and ready to eat

It is now a legal requirement for businesses to have a documented food management system. The “**Safer Food Better Business**” pack (Catering) produced by the Food Standards Agency has been developed to help you keep a record of what you do to make sure the food you produce is safe to eat. It provides key information on food hygiene and a diary section for simple record keeping.



To download a copy of the guide for caterers go to:

www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/

More information in keeping food safe is detailed below.

Common Food Hygiene Issues

Storage

Inappropriate storage is one of the most common faults reported as contributing to food poisoning outbreaks such as leaving food unrefrigerated for prolonged periods

- Ensure you've got 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. You must ensure that all high risk foods can be kept at 8° C or below.
- Check food labels for storage instructions.
- 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. If you can, use separate fridges.
- Keep raw and ready to eat food separate.
- 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.

Temperature control

- It is a legal requirement for high risk foods to be kept at 8° C or below. It is recommended that the coldest part of your fridge should be kept between 0° C and 5° C. Use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature regularly.
- Don't overload your fridge. The efficiency of the fridge will suffer if air cannot circulate freely.
- 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 that need to be chilled should be cooled as quickly as possible, preferably within 90 minutes. 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 this may not be the kitchen, however it should be somewhere suitable where the food is not exposed to the risk of contamination. 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 that 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 75°C.**

Cooking

- Cooking food thoroughly is the key to killing most of the harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. You should ensure that the core temperature reaches 75°C (or 70°C for 2 minutes or equivalent).
- 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.
- Use any cooking instructions on the packaging as a guide, but always check that the core temperature of the food is greater than 75°C
- 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.
- Always heat food until piping hot all the way through, and it is suggested that it reaches a core temperature of 75°C or more.

- 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 food that has been standing at room temperature for more than a couple of hours, and throw away any food scraps. Store leftovers in the fridge and eat within 48 hours.

In order to check these temperatures it is recommended that you obtain a probe thermometer which is disinfected between use.

Preventing Cross Contamination

The transfer of bacteria from one food to another is called cross contamination and is a major source of food poisoning. If raw food is allowed to touch or drip onto ready to eat foods harmful bacteria can be transferred.

These are some basic rules that will help you keep food safe

- Prepare and store raw food and ready to eat food separately. Don't use the same knife or chopping board for raw meat, ready to eat foods and raw fruit and vegetables unless they are cleaned and sanitised thoroughly between uses.
- Wash dishes, worktops and cutlery with hot water and detergent, then sanitise (2 stage clean). Regularly wash/wipe and sanitise items people touch frequently such as sinks, taps and handles.
- Keep dishcloths clean/disinfected and change them frequently. Also change tea towels and hand towels often. You might find that paper towels are a more practical option or colour coded disposable cloths.
- 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 dustbin, and when they look dirty.
- Hands should also be washed frequently when 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. It is recommended that you use blue plasters.
- Keep anyone who is ill, or has been recently ill, out of the kitchen, even if they're not handling food.



Particularly if they have had diarrhoea or have been vomiting. You must not prepare or serve food if you have had diarrhoea or vomiting. If you are free from taking medication and you have had no symptoms for 48 hours or longer, in most cases you can return to food handling activities.

You will need to ensure that the saniser you use complies with official standards of BS EN1276:1997 or BS EN 13697:2001.

Further information regarding the use of sanitisers to prevent E Coli 0157 contamination is available online at:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide

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 group 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 types of food may contain Listeria which can cause illness.

Allergen Risk Assessment

From 13 December 2014 it became a legal requirement for food businesses that serve meals or any unpackaged foods to provide information to their customers about food allergens.

There are three ways of providing this information to your customers:

- You can list the allergens on your printed menu or written listing of foods that you offer for sale.
- You can direct customers to a 'Menu Folder' at point of order which could include recipes, ingredient labels etc to help them make an informed decision
- You can provide a statement on the menu, or at the point of order (Allergen Signage)

You can find lots of helpful guidance through the Resources for Allergen Information – www.food.gov.uk/business–industry/allergy–guide/allergen–resources

Norfolk County Council's website has information and guidance for small businesses that sell meals or open foods, Food Allergen Risk Assessment for Caterers – www.norfolk.gov.uk/Business/Trading_Standards/Business_advice/Food_standards/Food_Information_Regulations/Allergens/index.htm

You can also test your knowledge about food allergies using the NHS website Food Allergy and Intolerance Myth Buster – www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Food–allergy–myth–buster.aspx

Norfolk County Council also have a useful Risk Assessment for Caterers webpage – www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC158019

Big functions, big responsibilities



You might find it useful to think about these issues:

- Large functions mean large quantities of food. You must make sure there is enough fridge and freezer space to cope. Is your domestic oven large enough for the job you are asking it to do?
- How will you cope with extra people in the kitchen, extra clutter, more dirty dishes, plates, utensils and messier worktops? You will need to ensure any helpers also understand the need for good hygiene practice and understand your procedures.
- Can you get the food to the function safely? Once there, will you have the necessary facilities for safe refrigerated storage and proper reheating?

Contact details

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Food, Health & Safety Team at Breckland District Council

Additional information is available online at:

[www.breckland.gov.uk/category/department/
environment-health/food-safety](http://www.breckland.gov.uk/category/department/environment-health/food-safety)

You can contact the Food team on tel: 01362 656870

Email: foodandhealth&safety@breckland.gov.uk

Food Standards Agency

www.food.gov.uk

Tel: 08456 060667

Food Standards Agency Publications

Food Standards Agency's publications offering specific guidance for **Caterers and childminders**.

The manual is available to view, download or order at:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/

Order by telephone on 0845 606 0667 and ask for the catering pack.

Food Handlers Fitness to work:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/foodhandlersguide

E.Coli 0157 Guidance Leaflet:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide

General advice about starting a new food business is also available at:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/startingup/

and you can download the leaflet “Starting up – Your first steps to running a catering business” which contains helpful information.

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