

## Commercial catering from home

This fact sheet provides information and advice about running a food business from home.

It is becoming increasingly popular to start and run a business from your own home. When food is involved this can present a whole range of new problems that need to be considered properly before starting out.

The laws on food safety apply just the same to a business run from home as to any other commercial premises. You will have to [register food premises](#) with the Environmental Health Department, which is free, and if you prepare high-risk food your home will be routinely inspected by Environmental Health.

### Is your kitchen adequate for a catering business?

The kitchen must be designed, constructed so that it can be kept clean and maintained in good state of repair. Any surface that comes into contact with food must be in good condition and be easy to clean and disinfect.

A sink with hot and cold water must be provided to wash utensils and equipment.

If you have a dishwasher this will be acceptable. If the sink is to be used for food washing as well then it must be cleaned and disinfected between use.

### Avoiding cross contamination

In a catering kitchen there are likely to be greater quantities of both raw and cooked food than a domestic kitchen. More pots, pans, plates and utensils will be used. There will be more washing up and greater problems keeping worktops clean.

It is important to separate raw and ready-to-eat food at all times. If raw food is allowed to touch or drip onto ready-to-eat food, harmful bacteria can be transferred onto the ready-to-eat food.

Prepare raw and ready-to-eat food separately. Do not use the same knife or chopping board for raw meat/fish, ready-to-eat food and raw

fruit/vegetables unless they are cleaned thoroughly between uses.

All possible sources of contamination must be removed from the kitchen prior to it being used for food preparation. Possible sources of contamination include trinkets, paper clips, drawing pins and plants.

Keep people (including children) not involved in food preparation out of the kitchen during preparation time.

### **Keep pets out of the kitchen**

Normal routine activities such as washing clothes must not be carried at such times. No one must smoke in the kitchen and at any other time when handling food. If anyone in the house is suffering from an infectious disease (such as food poisoning or colds) than you must consult your Environmental Health Officer immediately.

### **Hand washing**

Hand washing is the single most important method of reducing the spread of infection.

Hands must be washed frequently with warm water and soap. While preparing food, especially between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods, after using the toilet, after touching the dustbin and when they look dirty.

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 bathroom will be acceptable.

### **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 8oC (recommend below 5oC). It is recommended to keep commercial food in a separate fridge or freezer from your own food.

### **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 therefore you will need a probe thermometer to help you check.

## **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 that is less than 8°C. If you do not have a refrigerated vehicle you can use cool boxes, which must be cleaned and disinfected between use.

## **A documented food safety management system**

All business that 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 (Food Standards Agency website)* to help you meet this requirement.

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

Telephone 0845 606 0667

Email [foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk](mailto: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 self study or relevant prior experience may be good enough to meet this requirement.

## **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 your local authority

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 your local authority.

## **Insurance**

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

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

If you can't do it safely don't do it at all.