

ARE YOU CATERING FOR A SPECIAL OCCASION?

Some guidance for non-professional caterers preparing food for parties and celebrations, on how to avoid food poisoning problems.

General advice to organisers

- Planning ahead and attention to detail are the best ways to avoid food poisoning problems after large catering events.
- Establish, in advance, exactly what facilities are available at the even location where food will be served, including refrigerator space, washing facilities and kitchen equipment. Village and Church halls etc often have only the most basic facilities.
- Plan the menu to suit the type of accommodation available. If the food preparation or serving facilities are extremely basic or cramped, then limit the menu so it can be dealt safely with under the existing conditions.
- Individual volunteer caterers should on no account be asked to take on any responsibility for preparing, handling or serving food, if there is a suspicion that they (or anyone else in their household) might be unwell with any form of tummy upset, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- It is important not to allow more food to be prepared by each volunteer caterer than can be promptly and properly refrigerated. Domestic refrigerators often only have limited capacity and storage space available.
- Whatever the venue, it is most important to plan so that food does not lie around for long period at room temperature before consumption.
- It may be worth investing in a set of special hot and cold food thermometers to ensure that the food is either served at the correct hot temperature or stored at the right cold temperature.
- Hot food should be served at a temperature of 63°C or above. Cold food should be stored prior to consumption at 8°C or less (preferably 1 to 4°C). When food is laid out on the table, it should be covered until serving time.
- When catering for larger numbers, pasteurized egg should be used instead of fresh eggs for recipes which require raw or lightly cooked eggs.

- A food specialist at your local Environmental Health Department will be able to give you advice on all matters relating to food safety including storage, preparation, transport and serving.

GUIDANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL CATERERS

- Always wash your hands, work surfaces and utensils thoroughly before handling any foodstuff. This also particularly applies after processing raw food (to be cooked) and before dealing with ready to eat food.
- Store and handle raw food products separately so that they cannot touch or drip on to ready –to– eat foods. Raw meat and poultry commonly contain food poisoning bacteria which can be passed to ready-to-eat foods by touching or dripping of juices. Proper cooking generally kills these germs.
- Contamination of ready-to-eat foods with raw meat juices can also occur via your hands, kitchen implements or work surfaces. Food poisoning bacteria outbreaks commonly occur due to lack of care with this.
- Always pay particular attention to thorough handwashing and careful cleaning and disinfection of utensils and work surfaces after any contact with raw meats.
- Pets can harbour harmful germs and should be kept away from kitchen work surfaces and food preparation activities.
- Food, particularly meat, poultry and fresh shell eggs should be cooked through thoroughly. Minced meat in hamburgers should have no red bits.
- Food should not be prepared too far in advance. For most foods this means within 24 hours of the event if refrigerated, or within 4 hours if not.
- Cooked dishes which are to be served cold or reheated later, should be cooled to 10°C within 2 hours of preparation and then placed in a refrigerator and stored wrapped at 8°C or less (preferably 1 to 4°C).
- Foods should not be reheated more than once. When reheating, especially meat and poultry dishes, an internal temperature of at least 78°C must be achieved (a special probe thermometer can be used for this). Food must then be kept at an internal temperature of 63°C or above until serving.
- ‘Cool boxes’ with ice or ‘cold blocks’ should be used to transport foods needing refrigeration from the refrigerator in the kitchen of preparation, to the serving location, depending on the likely time in transit and the ambient temperatures.

**You can get further advice on all food safety matters by
contacting your local Environmental Health Department on: -
Tel. (01553) 692722 Minicom: (01553) 692138**

GET IT RIGHT...

**Make you celebration unforgettable for the
right reasons!**