

Guidance for food businesses / caterers on providing a takeaway service

The following guidance is to provide food businesses with information on how to ensure that takeaway services are operated safely and avoid the risk of food poisoning. Due to concerns regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) many of our food businesses are considering serving takeaway meals, where this has not previously been carried out. Careful controls must be in place to ensure food safety and this guidance should be considered alongside general food hygiene information.

[Read the Chartered Institute of Environment Health's guidance for food delivery and takeaway \(PDF: 662Kb / 8 pages\)](#)

Steps to consider are:

Menu choices

Select foods that are not high risk and are capable of being transported under temperature control more efficiently e.g. foods that are capable of cooking to very high temperatures and dense enough to hold those temperatures for longer. Avoid lightly cooked food. Keep the menu simple and avoid complex dishes or too wide a selection.

Taking food orders

When taking telephone orders, ask the customer what allergen requirements they may have, ensure that you have the correct controls in place if you agree to provide an allergen free meal.

Food safety information and instruction

Information must be given to the consumer on what they need to do to ensure that your takeaway remains safe to eat once it has been delivered. For example: for immediate consumption, whether is it safe to reheat or freeze and how to do this, how to defrost and reheat. It is strongly advised that takeaway meals are not provided as ready meals for storage and reheating at home and therefore bulk ordering is not advised.

Food allergens

You must ensure that you follow correct allergen control procedures and provide accurate information to the consumer.

[See allergen guidance for food businesses on the Food Standards Agency website](#) for guidance on allergens for food businesses in the retail and catering industry. Includes advice on providing information on 14 allergens and handling allergens in the kitchen.

Cooking

Ensure that all cooked food is thoroughly cooked all the way through, check that food is bubbling, that juices run clear and that there is no visible blood. You are advised to use a cleaned calibrated probe thermometer to make sure that the food reaches at least 70°C for 2 minutes or 75°C for 30 seconds or equivalent time/temperature combination.

Transporting takeaways

Hot boxes/cool boxes and containers used to transport food must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after use. Hot soapy water using a fresh cloth followed by using a food safe sanitiser that meets BS EN 1276:2009 should be used, ideally using disposable paper towel/roll.

The temperature of food must be controlled to ensure that harmful bacteria will not grow. To maintain safe food temperatures you must consider the time it takes to portion/pack the food and the travel time during delivery. Hot food must be held at 63°C or above. Food can fall below 63°C for one period of up to 2 hours only during service or display. Cold foods must be held below 8°C to keep them safe ideally between 0-5°C during service or display. Cold food can be held above 8°C for one period of up to 4 hours. Regardless of whether you use these exemptions you must not serve food that has become unsafe. Keeping a fridge thermometer in the cool box to monitor temperatures is advised.

The use of insulated cool boxes/bags with ice packs or insulated hot boxes will help comply with the requirements.

Takeaway packaging

Takeaway food packaging/containers must be purchased from reputable suppliers and be food grade suitable for its intended use e.g. hot food/lidded and must be stored in a clean area to avoid contamination.

Personal hygiene

All food handlers must have a high degree of personal hygiene, regular and thorough handwashing must take place before handling food, after handling raw food, after using the toilet, after handling bins, after touching your face. Clean protective clothing should be worn when preparing food. Food handlers must be excluded from working with food when they have symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain. Food handlers who are ill or showing symptoms must be excluded from work for 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

Food safety management procedures

Food Business operators must put in place all adequate controls to ensure that the food you serve is safe and not exposed to harmful contamination. Introducing a new service such as a takeaway service must be carefully planned and details of how you will put safe food safety controls into practice must be recorded in your written food safety management plan.

Infection control

For specific guidance on infection control in relation to Coronavirus (COVI-19) see:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on GOV.UK](#) for guidance for health professionals and other organisations.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) on the NHS website](#) for an overview.

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