



Safe Food Handling

General hints when providing food at events

If you are providing food and the provision of that food is not for profit, part of a raffle or part of any private arrangements, it is possible to cook the food without having to conform to local council permit regulations or fees. However a "duty of care" to those consuming the food is still incumbent upon the organiser. Organisers should also consider that providing food to persons that may have an allergy, intolerance or anaphylaxis, needs to be managed through the safe provision of food especially where children are involved.

To assist organizers with this issue, CAMS has provided a document on general recommendations for improved food production and dispensing and information regarding allergies. It is advisable that event organisers contact their local council to find out any further information or if in doubt as to their circumstances.

Food Handling

Bacteria that can cause food poisoning are easily transferred from the hands and clothes of people handling the food to the food itself.

It is important if you are handling and cooking food, consideration must be given to reduce the chances of food being contaminated.

Proper Practice

Where possible, the use of disposable food handling gloves when preparing and serving of food is advisable, if this is not possible, thoroughly wash your hands before coming into contact with the food.

Food handlers must wash their hands in between handling uncooked and cooked food.

Try to provide hand washing facilities near the area where the food preparation/cooking is taking place. This might include a bucket/tap with soap and paper towels. If using a bucket ensure that only clean water is used at all times.

Consideration to where disposal of waste water needs to be addressed if it is continuous and in large amounts i.e. into a sewer or a sullage system.

If the person preparing the food is sick, it is sensible that someone else takes on the preparation and cooking. There is a possibility that their germs are transferable to that food, making others sick.

Cuts and wounds should be covered with an appropriate bandage or band-aid.

Use separate utensils for raw and cooked foods to stop cross contamination.

Cross contamination can happen when bacteria from the raw meat, poultry and raw vegetables with visible dirt (such as unwashed potatoes), are transferred onto ready to eat food, such as green salads, rice or pasta salads, cooked meats or poultry or even fruit. The bacteria on the raw food are killed when the food is cooked, but the ready to eat food gets eaten without further cooking - bacteria and all

Ensure all work surfaces where food is being prepared, cooked or served are clean.

Provide appropriate bins that are easily accessible to food handlers. If the bins are outside, provide a lid to reduce problems from odour, insects, and rodents.

Food Storage/Cooking

Where it is appropriate ensure that the food is stored off the ground to keep it free from insect pests, animals, dust.

Check that food is stored appropriately i.e. refrigerated where possible. If mechanical refrigeration is not available the use of an esky with ice should be considered.

Ensure that food that should be refrigerated, include, meat(chops and sausages) seafood, poultry, sliced meats (salami, ham) dairy products, cooked rice or any food product that contains these foods eg: pies quiches, prepared salads.

When cooking, only remove meat products from the fridge/esky just prior to cooking. It is unwise to let it sit round non-refrigerated.

Make sure meat products are well cooked especially chicken.

Wrap or cover all cooked food on display.

Food Equipment

One of the most popular ways of cooking food at events is the B.B.Q. There are a few simple safety precautions that you can do:

- Be aware of any fire restrictions that may be in place such as total fire bans
- Where it is appropriate restrict access to B.B.Q area to reduce any chance of burns
- Always set up the B.B.Q on a firm, level base and sheltered from the wind, well away from anything that is flammable
- Make sure that gas hoses to the B.B.Q are secured and in good working order. Spray soapy water on suspect connections, bubbles will appear if gas is leaking
- Set up B.B.Q in a well ventilated area so that there is not a build-up of smoke
- If using LPG bottles secure them so they don't fall over and check that are in working order and not rusted
- Where appropriate, consider a fire extinguisher nearby for emergencies
- Request that no one smokes near the B.B.Q

Using Permanent Cooking Facilities

Often cooking equipment is already in place in a permanent hall, building or local sporting club. There are a few simple safety precautions:

- If using fixed cooking facilities check that the equipment is clean and functioning
- Enquire with manager of the premises if there is equipment that shouldn't be used
- Allow time for a hot display (For example, Bain mairre or pie warmer) to reach holding temperature before adding food
- Make sure the fridge is cold before putting food in it
- If using a deep-fryer make sure it has been filled with adequate fresh cooking oil and that it is on a firm level base
- Try and keep the working area clear of debris and clutter to prevent trips and falls and where appropriate keep the floor dry to prevent slips.

Food Allergies, Food Intolerance and Anaphylaxis

A food allergy occurs when there is an abnormal reaction by the immune system to a component in food, usually a protein. The immune system responds by generating antibodies, which can trigger symptoms such as hives (a type of skin rash), swelling around the mouth, vomiting or diarrhoea, difficulty breathing, collapsing, or anaphylaxis (a very severe allergic reaction). Total avoidance of the problem food is the only solution to a food allergy

The symptoms of food allergy can be life threatening.

Common symptoms include:

- itching, burning and swelling around the mouth
- runny nose
- skin rash (eczema)
- hives (urticaria – skin becomes red and raised)
- diarrhoea, abdominal cramps
- breathing difficulties, including wheezing and asthma
- vomiting, nausea

Food intolerance is a 'chemical' reaction that some people have after eating or drinking some foods; it is not an immune response. Food intolerance has been associated with asthma, chronic fatigue syndrome and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Symptoms of food intolerance can include:

- nervousness, tremor
- sweating
- palpitations
- rapid breathing
- headache, migraine
- diarrhoea
- burning sensations on the skin
- tightness across the face and chest
- breathing problems - asthma-like symptoms
- allergy-like reactions

Anaphylaxis, is a severe allergic reaction that needs urgent medical attention. Foods (such as peanuts, tree nuts, milk and egg), insect stings and some medicines are the most common allergens that cause anaphylaxis.

Within minutes of exposure to the allergen, the person can have potentially life- threatening symptoms, which include:

- difficult or noisy breathing
- swelling of the tongue
- swelling or tightness in the throat
- difficulty talking and/or a hoarse voice
- wheeze and/or persistent cough
- persistent dizziness or collapse
- becoming pale and floppy (in young children)



Several factors can influence the severity of anaphylaxis, including exercise, heat, alcohol, the amount of food eaten, and how food is prepared and consumed.

To prevent severe injury or death, a person with anaphylaxis requires an injection of adrenaline. Injections of adrenaline, which can be given by the person themselves or their family or carer, are available on prescription or directly from a pharmacy.

People who are considered to be at risk of anaphylaxis are prescribed an adrenaline auto injector. Adrenaline auto injectors are automatic injectors containing a single fixed dose of adrenaline. They are designed to be used by non-medical people and should be administered into the outer mid-thigh muscle.

Note: persons who are diagnosed as anaphylactic are encouraged to declare their medical condition so that appropriate management plans can be put in place, and to carry their own prescribed medication with them at all times for use if needed.