Frequently asked questions – food businesses

Pre-prepared packaged meals for home delivery or pick-up FAQs

In response to the evolving COVID-19 situation and the restrictions placed on dining in, SA Health is providing this fact sheet for businesses such as restaurants, hotels and cafés about making meals in advance to sell to customers via pick up from the business or home delivery. This FAQ sheet provides general guidance around food safety considerations and requirements in these circumstances.

What does my business need to consider when setting up for takeaway or delivery only?

Businesses engaging in this activity must ensure they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to manage the risks appropriately and that all health and hygiene standards are strictly adhered to.

To be able to supply meals for takeaway or delivery, many businesses may have to begin making and packing meals in advance. If your business has not conducted these activities before there are some important food safety precautions that need to be taken.

Food must be protected from contamination.

This includes microbiological, physical and chemical contamination.

Cooking and cooling

Food that is prepared in advance must be cooked and cooled correctly to reduce the growth of pathogenic bacteria. This includes potentially hazardous foods such as cooked rice, cooked and fresh pasta, curries, egg based dishes (e.g. quiche), meats and poultry must be adequately cooked to 75°C or equivalent to destroy pathogens. Once food is cooked, to minimise the growth of spore-forming bacteria, as required by Standard 3.2.2 Clause 7(3), foods must be cooled:

- within two hours – from 60°C to 21°C; and
- within a further four hours – from 21°C to 5°C;

You must be able to demonstrate to your local Environmental Health Officer that your business is cooling appropriately. To help speed up the cooling process you can do one or more of the following:

- portion the food into small, shallow containers;
- place the food into an ice bath during cooling;
- stir the product regularly;
- refrigerate and/or freezing as soon as possible.

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Food must be stored under temperature control

Potentially hazardous foods must be stored under temperature control:

- 5°C or below; or
- 60°C or above; or
- If the food is frozen, it must remain hard frozen

Allergens

A business should also consider their ability to cater to consumers with allergies, and if appropriate allergen management systems are in place.

How long can I keep pre-prepared food?

Due to risks of post-processing contamination and growth of harmful bacteria to unacceptable levels during prolong storage, it is recommended that refrigerated pre-prepared meals that contain potentially hazardous foods are kept for no longer than 3 days.

Do I need to label the products?

While there are exemptions under Standard 1.2.1 (6) for labelling of food that is made at the express order of the consumer, a business may need to consider how they will provide information if customers will be consuming foods at a later date. To help customers, consider instructions such as how long it can be kept for (considering that it may have already been held for up to 3 days by the business), storage conditions (eg keep refrigerated), reheat instructions.

Information that **must be** provided to the customer upon request, and is recommended to be on the label as well includes:

- name of the food;
- ingredient information
- advisory statements (e.g. allergen information)

What about delivery?

When delivering potentially hazardous foods, businesses must have a system in place to ensure food is protected from contamination and delivered under temperature control.

Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

Your local government Environmental Health Officers can provide best advice and guidance on safe food handling practices and the processes mentioned above. If further information is required you can contact SA Health's Food Standards Surveillance team on 8226 7124 or via healthfood@sa.gov.au.

For more information

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