

TIPS FOR CATERERS TO ACHIEVE A FOOD HYGIENE RATING OF 5

Following the tips in each of these areas should help improve your hygiene rating.

1. Reduce cross-contamination

1. Keep your washbasin clean, provided with hot and cold water and provide soap and preferably disposable paper towels to dry hands.
2. Food handlers must wear suitable clean and washable over clothing e.g. Uniform and /or apron.
3. Don't leave equipment or cleaning implements in your washbasin. Leave it clear and available for use and use it when necessary, especially after handling raw vegetables and raw meat or after touching knives and boards used to prepare these. Wash hands frequently.
4. The risks of E.coli 0157 infection requires caterers to have systems in place to avoid cross contamination between handling raw food (e.g. raw meat and unwashed salad/vegetables) and Ready To Eat (RTE) food that are eaten without further treatment (e.g. cooked meat and prepared salad). Systems to avoid cross contamination include:
 - Separate colour coded chopping boards and knives for raw and RTE food;
 - Separate colour coded cloths for washing equipment used for raw and RTE food;
 - Separate areas for preparing raw and RTE;
 - Separate times for handling raw and RTE food;
 - Separate fridges for raw and RTE foods;
 - Separate vacuum packing machines for raw and RTE foods;
 - Separate weighing scales/food slicers for raw and RTE foods;
 - Separate designated sink for food use;
 - Separate clean over clothing for handling raw and RTE food;
 - Use of disposable cloths for a) wiping down surfaces as part of clean-as-you-go, and b) wiping down after full cleaning and disinfection of surfaces/equipment.

2. Keep the kitchen and equipment visibly clean

1. Wash and then disinfect all boards, tables, knives and containers that come into contact with RTE food.
2. Only use disinfectant/sanitiser that meets BS 1276/13697.
3. Clean-as-you-go, preferably using disposable paper towels and not cloths.
4. Identify things people touch frequently - surfaces, taps, handles, boards, and knives and clean and disinfect them frequently.
5. Follow your cleaning schedule!

3. Keep chilled food safe

1. Check use by dates, cover all food, date code with stickers and aim for a fridge air temperature of 5C on the opening check.
2. Store raw food separately from RTE.
3. Keep a fridge thermometer in each fridge and compare its accuracy with your probe thermometer at least every three months (see below).
4. If you cool food, cool it down as quickly as possible in an area away from raw food, and place in the fridge within 90 minutes.

4. Cook, re-heat and hot hold to the correct temperature

Be clear about how you check that food is properly cooked or reheated.

1. Use a disinfected probe thermometer each time to check the food has reached 75C for 30 seconds.

Keep your probe thermometer in good working order and carry out and record calibration checks (in boiling water (100C) and melting ice (0C)) every 3 months as a minimum.

2. If you don't check with a probe thermometer you must choose other methods of checking the food is safely cooked/reheated.

a) Splitting (sausages/burgers) meat to check for inner colour change,

b) Boiling and simmering liquids (soup, gravy, sauce).

c) Using set times for foods reheated in a microwave, cooked in a deep fat / frying range, or cooked/reheated in a preheated oven. In these cases you must have a record of when you measured the temperature with a probe thermometer and the time taken to reach 75C or above. In Safer Food Better Business this is recorded as a Prove it Record.

3. If you hot hold food, once it has been cooked or reheated (to 75C or above), it must be kept at 63C or above. Always keep a thermometer in hot displays and check daily that the air temperature is kept over 63C, and carry out occasional (e.g. weekly) checks that the food temperature is above 63C using your disinfected probe thermometer. Also use a disinfected probe thermometer for daily checks that food in a Bain Marie is over 63C.

5. Documented food safety management system

1. It is a legal requirement for food businesses to identify their food hazards and have documented procedures in place to control them. Make sure you have fully completed and updated your documented system and if you make any changes in the way you do things, make sure they are safe and that you update what you had previously written down. Only businesses with completed and up to date systems get a top rating.

2. If you intend to use the 'Safer Food Better Business' pack as your documented food safety management system you must sign and date each of the safe methods listed that are relevant to your business to show that you have taken responsibility for ensuring that these safe methods are used in your business.

You must also complete the Management Section

1. **Diary** - tick and sign to confirm that you have completed the opening and closing checks every day. Also use the diary to write down when things have broken down (e.g fridge, hot water), when a repair has been identified/reported (e.g leaking pipe, tiles broken), and what you have done about it. Many business forget to write down these details.

2. **Four Weekly Review** - If there have been no recurring problems (more than 3 times in 4 weeks, and all else is well, you only need to tick the 'no' boxes to confirm that you have reviewed your operations and do not need to make any changes.

3. **Extra Checks** - Write down how often you will deep clean, carry out maintenance; test the probe thermometer in melting ice/boiling water, check for pests, and any other regular checks which you need to undertake which are not daily checks.

4. **Staff Training Record** - You must complete this to show that each named member of staff has been trained in the safe methods relevant to their job. Copy each relevant safe method as listed in the Safe Method Completion Record into the column under each heading - cross contamination, cleaning, chilling, cooking.

5. **Supplier List** - List all businesses you buy food from. This is used to check that you are buying your food from reputable suppliers, and will enable you and the inspecting Officer to contact them if there has been a problem.

6. **Contacts List** - List contact details for Environmental Health Officer, pest control operator, plumber, electrician, refrigeration engineer, waste contractor etc. This will assist contact when you have a problem and require their services.

7. **Prove it Description** - If the Safe Methods provided do not cover what you do, you are required to complete this section.

8. **Prove it records** Write down the day and details of the test that proved your method was safe.