HACCP
An Update for Catering Businesses

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Safer Food, Better Business
How to ensure your business meets the latest food safety requirements

The catering industry is experiencing the biggest changes in food safety laws for 15 years, due to new legislation which came into effect on 1 January 2006. The legislation affects all food businesses, large and small, including caterers, primary producers (such as farmers), manufacturers, distributors and retailers. How the legislation affects you will depend on the size and type of your business.

How has the law changed?

The legislation is being changed to set out more clearly the duties of food businesses to produce food safely with the key aid of reducing the number of cases of food poisoning. The new legislation requires all food businesses to put in place, implement and maintain food safety management procedures based on HACCP principles.

What is HACCP?

HACCP stands for ‘Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point’. It is an internationally recognised and recommended system of food safety management which focuses on identifying the ‘crucial points’ in a process where food safety problems (or ‘hazards’) could arise and putting steps in place to prevent things going wrong. Keeping records is also an important part of a HACCP system.

How will catering businesses be affected by the new regulations?

Catering businesses will need to have a food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP. They are already required to produce food that is safe to eat, but the new regulations state that catering businesses must be able to show what they do to make food safe – and have this written down. The type of system they need will depend on the size and type of business. Many small catering businesses will already have a suitable system, so they will not need to introduce a new one.

Northern Ireland – FSA Northern Ireland has developed guidance called ‘CookSafe’. Businesses that would like a copy should contact their local authority. Information packs are available to small catering businesses throughout the UK via their local authorities. These have been produced by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and by local authorities in Wales. Catering businesses do not have to use any particular pack or model, but they must make sure they have a food safety management system that is suitable for their business. Some businesses will already have a suitable system, so they will not need to introduce a new one.

How should small catering businesses set up a food safety management system?

The legislation affects all food businesses, large and small, including caterers, primary producers (such as farmers), manufacturers, distributors and retailers. How the legislation affects you will depend on the size and type of your business. The new legislation instead provides flexibility, requiring procedures based on the principles of HACCP and integration of these procedures with documentation and record keeping.

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England – The ‘Safer food, better business’ (SFBB) system has been developed by the FSA in partnership with small catering businesses and more than 50 local authorities. Download your free copy at www.food.gov.uk/safereating

Wales – local authority guidance packs on HACCP for caterers: businesses should contact their local authority for more information.

Scotland – FSA Scotland has developed a HACCP-based system called ‘CookSafe’. Businesses that would like a copy should contact their local authority.

How to ensure your business meets the latest food safety requirements

Safer food, better business

This pack has been developed to help small catering businesses such as restaurants, cafés and takeaways, comply with new regulations that came into effect from 1 January 2006. Most food businesses will already have in place a HACCP or food safety regulations based on common sense anyway; the new system simply ensures that all businesses have hazard controls over every area of possible risk, and that records are kept to prove that this is the case.

SFBB consists of a series of Safe Method Fact Sheets based on Cooking, Chilling, Cleaning, Cross-Contamination which detail how these key areas of food preparation and handling should be dealt with effectively. They include a section to help the caterer deal with basic supervision and management issues, and a daily diary form provides the record-keeping requirement. The Caterer should work through these Fact Sheets to select which are applicable to them, and adapt the procedures as necessary. This simple procedure is a hazard analysis, unique to them, and, provided it is maintained and records kept, meets the statutory requirements.

SFBB requires procedures to cover the following areas:

Cross Contamination

- Personal hygiene
- Cleaning clothes
- Separating ready and raw foods
- Pest control
- Maintenance
- Food allergies
- Physical and chemical contamination

Cleaning

- Effective cleaning
- Cleaning ‘day by day’ schedule

Chilling

- Storing and displaying chilled food
- Chilling down hot food
- thawing
- Freezing

Cooking

- Cooking safely
- Foods that need extra care
- Reheating
- Protecting ready to eat foods
- Checking your menu
- Hot-holding

Management

- Daily checks
- Other regular checks
- Deep cleaning
- Maintenance
- Checking probe equipment
- Checking pest control
- Using a probe to ensure your methods are safe
- Training and staff supervision
- Using customer feedback
- Handling suppliers
- Stock control
General tips on complying with the new rules

- Reduce the clutter and remove any old equipment in your kitchen in order to improve basic cleanliness. Inspectors hate cluttered kitchens and tend to look deeper.
- Check all “Use By” and “Best Before” dates of food in your refrigerator daily.
- Identify areas where you can segregate raw and cooked processes, and make a “Raw prep only” sign to demonstrate you have got the message.
- Improve “disinfection” with easy availability of sanitizer and disposable paper cloths.
- Ensure hand-washing availability with bactericidal soap and paper towels.
- Improve personal hygiene appearance with clean, ironed whites and crisp hats - first impressions count.
- Make a simple records system which identifies key critical areas such as delivery, storage, preparation, chilling, thawing, cooking and service. Monitor these in terms of temperature, date codes, times, weights, etc - that’s HACCP - and you have to find simple ways of showing that you know what you are doing.
- Keep bulk chemicals out of food rooms.
- Review your training status so you are up-to-date and can talk the environmental health practitioner’s language.
- Sort out your waste arrangements to reduce risk of pests, and set up recycling where possible.

Tips on chilling to comply with the new rules

- Follow the manufacturer’s guidelines on using all equipment, particularly in the case of refrigeration to ensure safe temperatures are maintained.
- Chilled food must be kept at 8ºC or below. To achieve this, fridge settings should be at a maximum of 5ºC, which will require a commercial refrigerator; domestic equipment just can’t cope with regular door openings or the ambient temperature in a catering environment.
- Purchase a decent probe thermometer and probe wipes. Larger businesses may be advised to invest in a temperature monitoring system.
- If you chill food down regularly, it may be advisable to purchase a Blast Chiller to ensure you do this safely. Some manufacturers, including Foster, offer Blast Chillers specially designed to meet the needs of smaller catering outlets, providing you with the means of chilling food down safely, without compromising on quality, taste and appearance.
- If you defrost lots of food in your business, you may wish to consider purchasing a special Thaw Cabinet, particularly if the food being thawed is high risk e.g. poultry. Some refrigeration equipment companies supply a cabinet specially designed for this purpose, which work by alternating between circulating gentle heat and refrigeration (via special air conducting and fans) ensuring a safe, even and speedy thaw.

Benefits of the new HACCP requirements

- Increased management awareness of food safety hazards
- Reduced risk to customers
- Fewer product complaints
- Greater customer confidence in the business
- Lower risk category for EHP inspections
- Enhanced ability to motivate and supervise staff

Summary

The main changes:

- Requirement for all catering businesses to have in place an acceptable HACCP-based system
- Emphasis on HACCP throughout
- HACCP methods now have to be fully documented
- Person responsible for records to be fully trained
- Emphasis on cleaning and disinfection in all areas
- More emphasis on temperature controls:
  - The chill chain not to be interrupted and temperatures to be monitored.
  - Clear rules on cooking with sufficient time and temperature.
- Requirement for improved segregation of raw and cooked foodstuffs
- Premises to be of sufficient size and design to allow for cleaning.
- Clear rules on keeping chemical cleaning product storage away from food production.
- Waste management must be “environmentally friendly”
  - It is still illegal to sell or process food which is unfit or injurious to health or is not of the “nature, substance or quality the customer demanded”.
  - Emphasis is placed on corrective action, both daily and with a 4-weekly review.

The flexibility of the 2006 legislation has met with a positive reception in the industry and has already created notable food safety improvements at knowledge, attitude and behavioural levels. In the long term, the new legislation will clearly improve food safety, making all businesses responsible and accountable without bureaucracy or time wasting, and should enable businesses to compete more effectively.

For further information:
www.food.gov.uk/safereating
www.instituteofhospitality.org
www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk
foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com

If you would like to order a hard copy of “Safer food, better business”, “CookSafe” (Scotland) or “Safe Catering” (N Ireland) call 0845 606 0667 or email foodstandards@ecgroup.uk.com

Other Foster Blue papers include:

Energy Efficiency
The ECA Scheme
Hydrocarbons in Refrigeration - What caterers need to know
The Climate Change Levy
Food Temperature Laws
Food Safety and E. Coli
Food Hygiene & Staff Training
Handling and Serving Ice
Safe Food Storage
The safe way to Blast Chill, Freeze and Thaw
Inspection by Environmental Health Practitioners
Plan for a Catering Crisis
Coldroom Panels, Polyurethane Foam & Fire Ratings: An Update

For further advice, please see our Blue Papers on Safe Food Storage and Blast Chilling. To receive your free copies, visit www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk

For copies of our other Blue Papers, visit www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk or call 0843 216 8800