

SAFETY

CONVERSATION

WHAT WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT

In this safety conversation we are going to discuss general food safety and the controls that everyone working with food needs to be aware of to make sure we provide safe food to our customers. Following this conversation, you will:

- Know how and why it is essential to keep food either hot or cold and minimise the time it is in the Danger Zone.
- Understand the importance of regular cleaning and sanitising, and of good personal hygiene.
- Know what to do if a customer reports that they experienced symptoms of foodborne illness.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Temperature control

Effective temperature control is fundamental to keeping food safe; this means keeping high risk foods out of the Danger Zone, which is the range of temperatures where bacteria, including those that cause foodborne illness, can grow rapidly. We do this by keeping food cold (below 5°C) or by keeping it hot (above 63°C). To verify that this is happening we regularly monitor delivery, fridge, freezer, cooking, reheating, transport and hot holding temperatures.

It is essential that the duration food is in the Danger Zone is minimised, including when food is reheated and when batch-cooked food is cooled. Cooling food quickly can be challenging, but things can go very wrong if the cooling process takes too long. Bacteria can grow exponentially (doubling in numbers as quickly as up to every 12 minutes), especially at temperatures around 30-40°C. Reheating food thoroughly is important to kill any bacteria that were able to grow during the cooling period, however, that does not necessarily make food safe. Some bacteria form toxins and others form spores which are not destroyed by reheating.

When conditions are suitable spores that were formed during cooling germinate into bacteria, which can then grow and multiply, potentially causing illness. These types of bacteria are often associated with starchy foods, such as rice, but also with stews, gravies and other wet dishes, including non-meat dishes. As they generally occur in batch-cooked food, they are often associated with larger outbreaks of food poisoning. If you do regular planned batch cooking and cooling, then you should only cool food in a blast chiller, to ensure we are keeping it as safe as possible."

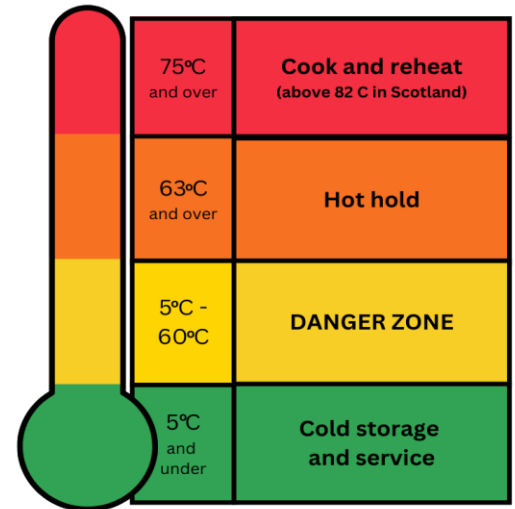
Cleaning and sanitising

Thorough and regular cleaning and sanitising, following a 2-stage process and adhering to sanitiser contact times, are essential to prevent bacteria from surviving and multiplying on work surfaces and equipment. Bacteria can very easily be transferred from any surface that has been in contact with uncooked meat or unwashed vegetables, that is not cleaned and sanitised properly, to other foods. This is of particular concern when ready-to-eat food comes into contact with a contaminated surface, as there is no cooking or reheating step to kill bacteria and make the food safe.

Personal hygiene

All food handlers can inadvertently be a source of bacterial contamination of food and food contact surfaces. The main control for preventing this route of food contamination is good personal hygiene, including regularly washing hands thoroughly with warm water and soap, and drying hands properly. Visitors, such as managers, waiting staff, delivery personnel etc can also bring bacteria into food preparation areas and they should wash their hands as they enter the area. It is also very important that anyone who has diarrhoea or vomiting stays away from work, as they are likely to be shedding pathogenic bacteria or viruses which can spread very easily between staff, to food and to customers.

Topic: Food Safety



PRACTICAL TIPS

Cool food quickly by:

- Using a blast chiller if possible
- Breaking down food into smaller portions
- Transferring food to shallow containers
- Elevating containers from the worksurface
- Stirring liquid dishes regularly
- Rinsing rice, pasta and grains with cold water

Keep food hot by:

- Covering food where possible
- Stirring wet dishes to prevent cold spots
- Avoiding hot holding of dry dishes as they don't hold the heat well

IF IT GOES WRONG

If you are notified that a customer develops gastrointestinal symptoms after eating food at your unit, you must complete an Alleged Food Poisoning Report and log the incident on AIR as soon as possible.

Gather and record as much information as possible and collate any relevant records, including delivery, storage, cook, chill and service temperatures.

The sooner the incident is reported the quicker it can be investigated, meaning that appropriate action can be taken quickly to prevent any further incidents of illness.

MORE INFORMATION

Relevant Good Hygiene Practices and Food Safety Conversations available in your FSMS and on the HSE website

