

Safe Food Handling Study Unit

Objectives

- To understand the health and safety issues which must be addressed in regard to food safety control
- To outline the responsibilities of the Food Safety Supervisor

FOOD SAFETY

In serving food to the community, there are some things that you must do to make sure that the food is safe to eat. This unit aims to make your job of making food safe easier. Food Safety is a term which describes those everyday things we do to prevent sickness from eating foods.

It is estimated that 8 million people in Australia are affected by food poisoning each year. One of the reasons for this is that you cannot always tell by looking at food, smelling it, or tasting the food whether it contains dangerous levels of food-poisoning organisms.

This means that any food served by your organisation:

- must be safe for people to eat (fit for human consumption);
- cannot contain things that should not be in it (adulterated or contaminated);
- must be in good condition (not deteriorated or perished) ;

It also means that:

- your organisation must have a food safety plan that identifies and controls potential food hazards;
- the place where food is prepared, the equipment used to prepare it, and the vehicles used to transport it must be clean and hygienic.

While some States may not be quite as strict in regard to food safety laws it is important that you know what your local requirements are and comply with them. Food safety is mostly common sense, and this unit will help you do the things needed to make food safe and meet the requirements of the law.

STOPPING FOOD POISONING

People get sick from food because the food they have eaten contains bacteria, viruses, toxins, contaminants or harmful chemicals. It can take from an hour to a few days to develop food poisoning, depending on the cause, but the best way of preventing food poisoning is to use safe food handling practices.

Bacteria are the biggest problem, because they are so common, and are found in soil, on animals, people and even their clothes. In the kitchen, bacteria often come from raw vegetables and raw meat. Sometimes bacteria can move from these raw

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ingredients to cooked food, in a process called *cross contamination*. Even though most of our work is with vegetarian food sources, it is still important to maintain strict food hygiene laws. In order to comply with government laws it is also necessary to understand and display food safety requirements for all foods, including meat.

Some ways that these germs can move from dirty to clean surfaces include:

- from hands to food;
- from cutting boards, knives and other utensils on to food; and
- from one food to another, especially from raw to cooked food.

Once bacteria are in a food, they can increase their numbers quickly. They just need the right conditions. This means a

- temperature of between 5°C and 60°C,
- time and
- water.

There are six key points to breaking this chain of food poisoning. They are:

1. Ensuring someone is responsible for all aspects of food preparation and service during your organisation's food events;
2. Having each person handling or preparing the food, knowing about and practising safe food handling;
3. Making sure that everything used in preparing the food is clean and hygienic;
4. Using safe food preparation processes;
5. Adopting safe food storage; and
6. Displaying and holding food safely until it is served Error! Reference source not found.

FOOD SAFETY SUPERVISOR

At every event where food is served, it is advisable to have a Food Safety Supervisor.

The Food Safety Supervisor is responsible for all food operations, including food safety supervision. The things the Supervisor must be familiar with include.

- Proper food handling at temporary and/or permanent food premises;
- Good personal hygiene practices;
- Hygienic food preparation;
- Proper ways of storing and transporting food;
- How to check temperatures;
- Displaying and holding food safely; and
- How to clean thoroughly.

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The Food Safety Supervisor must also:

- help all volunteers understand food safety and safe food handling practices;
- supervise to check that everyone handles and prepares food safely;

GOOD FOOD HYGIENE PRACTICES

The following food safety procedures are followed by volunteers to ensure food served is safe:

1. Food Safety Procedures - Personal Hygiene

One of the keys to safe food is good personal hygiene practised by people who prepare and serve it. The bacteria that can cause food poisoning can easily transfer from the hands and clothes of the people who handle food.

As well as hands, clothes and other body parts, hair and jewellery can contain and spread bacteria to food.

Important, too is the health of the people handling food. People with illnesses, and those with wounds like cuts and scratches can spread illness.

Money can also carry germs, so handling money should be done by people who don't handle food.

Some important practices for personal hygiene are listed below:

Hand washing

- **Always** wash hands before handling food.
Wash them completely, remembering the back of the hands, wrists, between the fingers and under your fingernails, using a nail brush if needed. Use soap and warm water for thorough hand washing, then dry with a dry paper towel.
- Wash your hands **again**:
 - after visiting the toilet;
 - after handling raw food;
 - after using a tissue, coughing or sneezing;
 - after handling garbage;
 - after changing nappies;
 - after handling pets or other animals; or
 - after smoking or touching your hair or other body parts.

Personal cleanliness

- Tie back long hair or cover it. No one wants to have hair in their food!
- Wear clean, protective clothing over your normal clothes or a uniform.
- Wear limited jewellery - plain band type rings.

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Clean personal behaviour

- When handling, preparing or selling food, do not smoke, drink or chew gum.
- Do not touch or brush your hair or face, eat or spit.

Managing illness or injury

- Any wound or cut on your hands or arms should be completely covered with a brightly covered bandage or wound strip (like a Bandaid™). If the wound is on the hands, you should wear disposable gloves that cover the wound strip, and change both glove and wound strip regularly.
- If someone is sick, or suffering from a disease which might be transmitted through food, they shouldn't work. If they have been vomiting or suffering from diarrhoea any time in the two days before your fundraising event, they shouldn't work.

Good Food Hygiene Practices

The following food safety procedures are followed by volunteers to ensure food served is safe:

2. Food Safety Procedures - Food Premises

If your organisation uses a more permanent kitchen, like a community hall, the food handling processes and operations need to be organised so food served is safe. In your safe food kitchen, you need:

- plenty of hot and cold water;
- refrigerators to keep cold food cold and freezers to keep frozen food frozen;
- hand washing facilities- a basin, soap and paper towels separate from dishwashing facilities;
- sinks big enough to clean cooking and serving equipment and utensils;
- uncluttered surfaces which are easy to keep clean;
- a place to store food where mice, rats and insects cannot get to it;
- a way to stop pests like birds, animals and insects getting into the kitchen;
- enough rubbish containers to collect and store all waste.

There may be times when a food event takes place at a temporary food premises such as a stall or in a food vehicle.

You must take special care at temporary premises to keep food safe, protecting it from sunlight, dust, insects and handling by customers. The following issues need to be looked at with temporary food premises:

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- if there's no kitchen or food vehicle available, you will need a tent or marquee to prepare food in;
- benches or tables need to have surfaces that are smooth and easy to keep clean. Plastic tablecloths are ideal;
- hand washing facilities near the stall - with water, a basin, soap and paper towels. (Make your own hand washing facilities if there is nothing near the stall. You can make a water supply using drums with taps from a camping shop, and get hot water from an urn.) This should be kept separate from the dish washing facilities;
- a place to wash up cooking equipment, dishes and utensils. You may have to make your own if there is nothing near the stall;
- a way of dealing with waste water from cooking, cleaning and hand washing. Do not just tip them on the ground or down the drain;
- refrigerators to keep cold food cold and freezers to keep frozen food frozen. If you plan to hire a portable cool room get one with a *calibrated thermometer* so you can check temperatures;
- enough rubbish containers to collect and store all waste away from the food preparation area.

Good Food Hygiene Practices

The following food safety procedures are followed by volunteers to ensure food served is safe:

3. Food Safety Procedures - Food Preparation

Nearly all food naturally contains bacteria, and sometimes these bacteria can cause food poisoning. Food has to be handled correctly to make sure that it doesn't become contaminated, and that the bacteria in it don't get a chance to increase in number.

Receiving food

Keeping food safe starts from the moment that the food arrives in your premises.

You are responsible to store food safely from the time it arrives, either for Church Luncheons or Soup Kitchens

Preparing food

- Wash all fruit and vegetables well in clean water before using them;
- Do not use food from damaged packaging - dented cans, torn packaging, leaking packages and cracked eggs;

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* **Examples of 'high risk' foods** include dairy (custards, cream cakes, unbaked cheese cakes, soft cheeses), egg products (mayonnaise), cooked rice and pasta, small-goods (ham, salami, Strasbourg), and processed meat products (pate). Foods which would not be included in this group are dried food powders in their original package, jars and cans or other containers of food which have been processed by heat.

Handling food

- Cooked, or ready to eat food should not be handled with bare hands. Use tongs, spatulas, spoons, or cover hands with disposable gloves;
- Raw food that is going to be cooked can be handled with bare hands;
- Change disposable gloves:
 - every hour;
 - when they tear;
 - when you change tasks, like moving from cleaning to cooking; or from raw food preparation to cooked food serving.

Cooking and heating

- Thaw frozen food before cooking;
- Thaw frozen food in the microwave or at the bottom of the refrigerator overnight;
- Never put thawed food back into the freezer;
- Cook thawed food *immediately* after thawing;
- Reheat thoroughly. Reheated food should be brought to the boil and simmered for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Preparing Food at Home

The Golden Rules for preparing food at home to bring to food functions are:

- Use only wholesome and undamaged food products. Do not use:
 - Cracked eggs;
 - Products with mould or discolouration;
 - Badly dented or swollen cans;
 - Food from ripped or damaged packaging or with broken seals.

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- Check dates on food packages before using them. The 'use-by' or 'best before' date marking indicates the date at which the food will be at its best quality. After that date, some foods may still be OK, but other foods, such as dairy products should not be used once the 'use-by' date has expired. *If in doubt, throw it out!*
- **Follow good hygienic practices. These include:**
 - Wash your hands thoroughly before handling food;
 - Use clean utensils & chopping boards;
 - If you are feeling sick, do not prepare food,
- Ensure all work surfaces are clean before using.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables thoroughly under running water before using.
- If transporting food that has just been cooked, do not pack it whilst it is still warm, unless it can be delivered to the event in less than 30 minutes. Cool the food in the household refrigerator, as food cannot cool quickly enough in an Esky™.

Good Food Hygiene Practices

The following food safety procedures are followed by volunteers to ensure food served is safe:

4. Food Safety Procedures - Food Storage, Display and Transport

All food contains bacteria, some of which can cause food poisoning. If bacteria are given the right conditions, they can multiply very quickly, and become dangerous. Temperatures of between 5°C and 60°C are known as the *danger zone*, so it is very important that in storing and displaying foods, they spend as little time as possible at these temperatures.

Storing food

Temperature

- Foods that contain meat, dairy or fish (not already processed by heat) are '**high risk**' foods and must be stored at the correct temperature. This means:
 - Kept frozen (hard) at –15°C or colder; or
 - Kept cold at 5°C or colder.
- Defrost freezers regularly and don't overload them;

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- Check the temperature of refrigeration equipment with a *calibrated thermometer* regularly (see *Checking thermometer* in this unit). Report problems with fridge and freezer temperatures to the Event Coordinator immediately.

Time

- Do not keep food in storage too long. Note dates that food was purchased or prepared. Remember the first in-first out rule for stock rotation.
- Chilled food should not be out of refrigeration for very long. Throw chilled food out after it has been at room temperature for two hours or longer;
- Only keep enough food at room temperature that can be used within two hours.

Contamination

- Store raw food separately from cooked food, and below it, so that no drips can fall from the raw food on to the cooked or ready to eat food.
- Cover all food with lids, foil or plastic wrap. Do not keep unused food in an opened can - transfer it to a suitable container.
- Chemicals, cleaning equipment and personal belongings must be stored away from food.

Displaying food

- Wrap or cover all food on display;
- Tag or label food trays where necessary, not the food;
- Refrigerated displays should keep the food at 5°C or colder;
- Hot displays (like a bain marie or pie warmer) should keep the food at 60°C or hotter;
- Do not use hot display equipment (like a bain marie or pie warmer) to reheat food;
- Do not overload hot display equipment by stacking food above the level of the trays;

Transporting food

- Food that is delivered to you should come in a food transport vehicle designed to keep food safe and clean. If using a private vehicle, the food area should be free of dirt, dust and animal hairs.
- There should never be animals in a food transport vehicle.
- Raw food should be wrapped or in bags and ready-to-eat food should be covered and secured within an Esky™
- Food which has to be kept cold should be transported at the correct temperature, using an Esky™ with ice packs or refrigeration unit.

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Good Food Hygiene Practices

The following food safety procedures are followed by volunteers to ensure food served is safe:

5. Food Safety Procedures - Cleaning

Keeping the kitchen or food preparation area clean is one of the best ways of avoiding food contamination. Clean means clean and sanitised surfaces, no dirt, no left over food, and no mice, rats or insects.

You can make sure the kitchen is really clean by conducting regular cleaning programs:

- Do your cleaning the same way every time. For example, wash down the walls before the benches, benches before floors;
- Clean all your equipment and food preparation areas every time, before and after you use them;
- Clean all surfaces of the kitchen when it is needed. Remember to clean drawer and cupboard handles when needed.

You will need to prepare a regular cleaning schedule which shows:

- exactly what and where to clean;
- how often to do each job;
- which chemicals to use and the proper way to use them;
- who is responsible for each cleaning job.
- Paper towels are better for cleaning than cloth. If you use cloth, make sure that they are washed in hot water after every use.
- Store chemicals and other cleaning equipment away from food preparation areas.

Six steps to good cleaning

- Pre-clean - Scrape, wipe or sweep away any food scraps, then rinse with water
- Wash - Use hot water and detergent to take off any grease or dirt
- Rinse - Rinse off any loose dirt or detergent foam
- Sanitise - Use a commercial food grade sanitiser and follow the instructions
- Final rinse - Wash off sanitiser (check instruction to see if needed)
- Dry - Allow to air dry

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6. Food Safety Procedures - Temperature Checking

Keeping food at the right temperature is very important to stop bacteria from growing.

Remember:

- Keep frozen food frozen hard (-15°C or colder);
- Keep cold food cold (5°C or colder);
- Keep hot food hot (60°C or hotter),
- Avoid the 'danger zone' (5 - 60°C) for 'high risk' foods.

To make sure that food is at the correct temperature, you need to check temperatures regularly and to do, this properly, you will need an accurate thermometer. You can check the accuracy of your thermometer yourself using the following procedure:

- Crush ice into a container;
- Add enough pre-cooled water to make an ice/water mixture or slurry; then
- Insert thermometer into the ice/water mixture;
- Wait three minutes and record the temperature;
- Take two more temperature readings one minute apart.

If the three readings have more than 5°C then the thermometer is not accurate
Try a different thermometer and repeat this testing procedure.

Reference:

Victorian Government Department of Human Services;
GUIDELINES FOR FOOD SAFETY

Health Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
Victorian Conference Limited
141 Central Road
Nunawading, Victoria, 3131