

Preparation of Food and Drink on Church Premises

Applies to: Local URC churches, church halls, church cafes, coffee mornings, lunches, fundraising events, community activities, youth groups, food banks and any activity involving the preparation, service, sale or distribution of food and drink.

Purpose

This guidance has been developed to help local churches prepare, serve, sell and distribute food safely and lawfully.

Food supplied at church activities must be safe to eat and comply with applicable food safety legislation. This applies whether food is sold, provided free of charge, prepared by volunteers or supplied as part of a church activity or fundraising event.

This guidance applies across England, Scotland and Wales.

Relevant Legislation

Churches preparing, serving or selling food should be aware of the following legislation:

Great Britain

- Food Safety Act 1990
- Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013
- Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations 2006
- Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs (as retained in UK law)
- Food Information Regulations 2014
- The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (Natasha's Law)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 where employees are involved

Does This Apply to Churches?

Yes. Food provided, sold or distributed at:

- Coffee mornings
- Church lunches
- Community cafes
- Toddler groups
- Youth groups
- Food banks
- Fundraising events
- Fetes
- Christmas fairs
- Harvest suppers
- Holiday clubs

must be safe for consumption and comply with food safety requirements.

When Does a Church Become a Food Business?

A church may be considered a food business if it regularly:

- Sells food or drink
- Supplies food as part of organised activities
- Stores food
- Prepares food
- Handles food for distribution
- Operates a café or catering activity

If activities are very limited and infrequent, formal registration may not be required. However, food must still be safe, and good hygiene practices should always be followed.

Where there is uncertainty, churches should seek advice from their local authority Environmental Health Department.

Registration Requirements

Churches may need to register as a food business with the local authority if food activities are undertaken on a regular basis. Registration is free.

Examples that may require registration include:

- Regular church cafes
- Community kitchens
- Ongoing lunch clubs
- Food preparation for regular public events

Occasional fundraising events, church fetes and infrequent food activities may not require registration, depending on the circumstances.

Food Hygiene Requirements

All food handlers should follow the principles of the 4 Cs of Food Hygiene:

Cleaning

- Wash hands regularly
- Clean food preparation surfaces before and after use
- Wash equipment thoroughly
- Keep kitchens and serving areas clean

Chilling

- Keep chilled foods refrigerated
- Maintain the cold chain during transport and service
- Do not leave food requiring refrigeration at room temperature longer than necessary

Cooking

- Cook food thoroughly

- Follow cooking instructions
- Ensure food is piping hot before serving

Cross-Contamination

- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate
- Use separate utensils where appropriate
- Store food correctly
- Wash hands after handling raw meat, fish or poultry

Volunteer Food Handlers

Church volunteers do not generally need formal food hygiene certificates to prepare food for church activities.

However, churches must ensure that anyone preparing or handling food understands basic food safety and hygiene principles and is capable of undertaking their role safely.

Providing basic food hygiene awareness training is considered good practice.

Home-Made Food

Home-made food may be provided at church events, including:

- Cakes
- Biscuits
- Traybakes
- Other baked goods

provided the food has been prepared hygienically and is safe to eat.

Churches should take particular care where food contains:

- Raw eggs
- Cream
- Fresh dairy products
- Meat products

These foods may present a greater food safety risk.

Food Allergens

Food allergies can cause serious illness and may be life-threatening. Churches should always seek to provide clear allergen information. The 14 regulated allergens include:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Soya
- Wheat and other cereals containing gluten
- Fish
- Crustaceans
- Shellfish
- Sesame

- Mustard
- Celery
- Lupin
- Sulphur dioxide/sulphites

Non-Prepacked Food

Examples include:

- Meals
- Buffet food
- Loose cake slices

Where a church operates as a food business, information about allergens must be available to consumers.

Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS)

Examples include:

- Sandwiches made and packaged on church premises for later sale
- Wrapped cakes prepared for sale

These products may be subject to additional labelling requirements, including a full ingredients list and highlighted allergens.

Temperature Control

Hot Food

Food should be served hot and not left standing for prolonged periods.

Chilled Food

Food requiring refrigeration should be kept chilled until served. Examples include:

- Sandwich fillings
- Dairy products
- Cooked meats
- Desserts

Chilled food should not be left unrefrigerated for excessive periods. Food Standards Scotland advises that chilled food left out for service should not be left out for more than four hours.

Food Donations and Food Banks

Where churches operate food banks or community pantries:

- Check packaging is intact
- Check use-by dates
- Do not distribute food beyond its use-by date
- Store food appropriately
- Follow supplier guidance where appropriate

Food must not be supplied after its use-by date under any circumstances.

Kitchen Facilities

Church Kitchens Should:

- Be maintained in a clean condition
- Have suitable handwashing facilities
- Have access to hot and cold water
- Provide suitable food preparation surfaces
- Be adequately ventilated and lit
- Have arrangements for waste disposal

Regular cleaning schedules should be implemented.

Special Events and Fundraising

Additional planning may be required for;

- Barbecues
- Outdoor events
- Christmas fairs
- Community festivals
- Large catering activities

Churches should ensure:

- Adequate refrigeration
- Safe cooking arrangements
- Suitable handwashing facilities
- Appropriate supervision

Accident, Illness and Contamination

Food preparation should not be undertaken by anyone experiencing:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Suspected food poisoning
- Infectious illness

Individuals should not return to handling food until they are symptom-free for the recommended period. Good practice is generally to exclude food handlers for at least 48 hours after symptoms cease.

Responsibilities

Church Trustees must:

- Ensure safe food practices are in place
- Assess whether registration is required
- Ensure allergen information is available where required
- Monitor food safety arrangements

Volunteers and Food Handlers must:

- Follow hygiene procedures
- Report illness
- Handle food safely
- Follow church food safety arrangements

Food Safety Checklist

Before providing food:

- ☐ Food source is known
- ☐ Use-by dates checked
- ☐ Food stored correctly
- ☐ Food handlers are fit to work
- ☐ Kitchen is clean
- ☐ Handwashing facilities available
- ☐ Allergens identified
- ☐ Chilled foods kept cold
- ☐ Hot foods cooked thoroughly
- ☐ Waste arrangements available
- ☐ Equipment clean and safe

Food Safety Risk Assessment Template

Purpose: This template should be completed where food is prepared, handled, served, sold or distributed on behalf of the church. It can be used for regular activities (e.g. coffee mornings, lunches, cafes and toddler groups) or one-off events (e.g. fairs, harvest suppers, barbeques and fundraising events).

The assessment should be reviewed periodically and whenever there are significant changes to the activity, venue, menu or method of food preparation.

Church Details

Church Name: _____

Activity/Event: _____

Location: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Assessment Completed By: _____

Date of Event/Activity: _____

Review Date: _____

Description of Food Activity

Briefly describe the activity:

Examples:

- Coffee morning
- Church lunch
- Café
- Community meal
- Fundraising event
- Food bank
- Children's activity
- Holiday club

People Who May Be Affected

Tick all that apply:

- ☐ Volunteers
- ☐ Employees
- ☐ Ministers
- ☐ Congregation Members
- ☐ Visitors
- ☐ Children and Young People
- ☐ Older People
- ☐ People with Allergies
- ☐ Contractors
- ☐ Members of the Public
- ☐ Other: _____

Food Safety Hazard Assessment

Hazard	People at Risk	Existing Controls	Risk Level (L/M/H)
Poor personal hygiene			
Food contamination			
Cross-contamination			
Incorrect food storage			
Inadequate cooking			
Temperature control failure			
Food allergens			
Unsafe food transport			
Cleaning and sanitizing failures			
Illness of food handlers			
Foreign objects in food			
Other			

Personal Hygiene

Confirm the following arrangements are in place

Control Measure	Yes	No	N/A
Handwashing facilities available	☐	☐	☐
Soap available	☐	☐	☐
Hand drying facilities available	☐	☐	☐
Food handlers aware of hygiene requirements	☐	☐	☐
Food handlers instructed not to prepare food when ill	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Food Storage

Control Measure	Yes	No	N/A
Refrigerator available where required	☐	☐	☐
Food stored off the floor	☐	☐	☐
Dry goods stored appropriately	☐	☐	☐
Raw and ready-to-eat foods separated	☐	☐	☐
Use-by dates checked	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Cooking and Temperature Control

Control Measure	Yes	No	N/A
Food cooked thoroughly	☐	☐	☐
Hot food served promptly	☐	☐	☐
Chilled foods kept appropriately cold	☐	☐	☐

Suitable refrigeration available	☐	☐	☐
Arrangements for transporting food safely	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Allergen Management

Requirement	Yes	No	N/A
Allergens identified in menu items	☐	☐	☐
Ingredients information available	☐	☐	☐
Volunteers understand allergen risks	☐	☐	☐
Information available for customers when required	☐	☐	☐
Risk of cross-contamination considered	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Cleaning and Waste Management

Requirement	Yes	No	N/A
Cleaning material available	☐	☐	☐
Food preparation surfaces sanitised	☐	☐	☐
Waste bins provided	☐	☐	☐
Waste removed regularly	☐	☐	☐
Kitchen maintained in clean condition	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Venue Assessment

Check	Yes	No	N/A
Suitable water supply available	☐	☐	☐
Adequate lighting	☐	☐	☐
Adequate ventilation	☐	☐	☐
Work surfaces in good condition	☐	☐	☐
Toilets and handwashing facilities available	☐	☐	☐
Suitable waste disposal arrangements	☐	☐	☐

Additional Risks for Events

Complete where applicable:

Risk	Yes	No	N/A
Outdoor food preparation	☐	☐	☐
Barbeque or open flame cooking	☐	☐	☐
Temporary food preparation area	☐	☐	☐
Large numbers attending	☐	☐	☐
Food transported from another location	☐	☐	☐
Food prepared in domestic kitchens	☐	☐	☐

Details of controls:

Additional Actions Required

Action Required	Responsible Person	Target Date	Completed
			☐
			☐
			☐
			☐

Overall Risk Assessment

Overall Risk Rating:

- ☐ Low
☐ Medium
☐ High

Assessment Outcome:

- ☐ Activity may proceed
☐ Additional controls required before proceeding
☐ Activity should not proceed until risks are controlled

Comments:

Assessor Declaration

I confirm that I have assessed the food safety risks associated with this activity and recorded the findings accurately.

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Authorisation (Where required)

Name: _____

Role (Trustee/Elder/Minister/Event Organiser): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Review Triggers

This assessment should be reviewed:

- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Following a food safety incident
- ☐ Following a customer complaint
- ☐ Following a change in menu or catering arrangements
- ☐ Following refurbishment of kitchen facilities
- ☐ Following identification of new hazards
- ☐ Before significant events involving food preparation or service

Quick Reminder

Before any food is served, ensure:

- ☐ Food handlers are fit and healthy
- ☐ Allergens have been identified
- ☐ Food has been stored correctly
- ☐ Equipment is clean
- ☐ Handwashing facilities are available
- ☐ Food is cooked and served safely
- ☐ Any high-risk foods have been handled appropriately
- ☐ Appropriate supervision is in place

Appendix B: Kitchen Inspection Checklist

Kitchen Inspection Checklist

Purpose: This checklist should be completed regularly to help ensure that church kitchens and food preparation areas are safe, clean and suitable for the preparation, handling, storage and service of food.

Recommended Frequency

- Weekly where kitchens are regularly used
- Before major events involving food preparation
- Following any food safety incident or complaint
- Following kitchen refurbishment or significant maintenance works

Church Details

Church Name: _____

Kitchen Location: _____

Date of Inspection: _____

Inspected By: _____

General Cleanliness

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Kitchen is clean and tidy	☐	☐	
Floors are clean and free from food debris	☐	☐	
Walls and surfaces appear clean	☐	☐	
Food preparation surfaces are clean and sanitized	☐	☐	
Cleaning schedule is being followed	☐	☐	
No excessive build-up of grease or dirt	☐	☐	

Handwashing Facilities

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Handwashing facilities	☐	☐	
Hot and cold running water available	☐	☐	
Soap provided	☐	☐	
Hygienic hand drying facilities available	☐	☐	

Handwashing area unobstructed	☐	☐	
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Food Storage

Dry Storage

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Food stored off the floor	☐	☐	
Storage areas clean and tidy	☐	☐	
Food containers suitably labelled	☐	☐	
No signs of pest activity	☐	☐	
Food within use-by or best-before dates	☐	☐	

Comments

Refrigerated Storage

Inspected Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Refrigerator clean and in good condition	☐	☐	
Refrigerator appears to be operating correctly	☐	☐	
Raw and ready-to-eat foods separated	☐	☐	
Food covered and stored appropriately	☐	☐	
Expired food removed	☐	☐	

Fridge Temperature Recorded

Temperature: _____ °C

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Action Required

Freezer Storage

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
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Freezer in good condition	☐	☐	
Food appropriately wrapped	☐	☐	
Food clearly identified where necessary	☐	☐	
Excessive ice build-up absent	☐	☐	

Food Preparation Areas

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Work surfaces in good condition	☐	☐	
Chopping boards clean and fit purpose	☐	☐	
Utensils clean and stored hygienically	☐	☐	
No evidence of cross-contamination risks	☐	☐	
Food equipment appears well maintained	☐	☐	

Cooking Equipment

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Ovens clean and operational	☐	☐	
Hobs functioning correctly	☐	☐	
Microwave clean and operational	☐	☐	
Small appliances appear safe and in good condition	☐	☐	
Defective equipment removed from service	☐	☐	

Food Allergens

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Allergen information available where required	☐	☐	
Ingredients information available	☐	☐	
Volunteers aware of allergen procedures	☐	☐	
Risk of allergen cross-contamination considered	☐	☐	
Labelling arrangements in place where required	☐	☐	

Waste Management

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Waste bins available	☐	☐	
Bin lids functioning correctly	☐	☐	
Waste removed regularly	☐	☐	
Recycling arrangements available (where applicable)	☐	☐	
External waste storage area satisfactory	☐	☐	

Pest Control

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
No evidence of rodents	☐	☐	
No evidence of insects	☐	☐	
Doors and windows in good condition	☐	☐	
Food appropriately protected	☐	☐	
Pest control arrangements available if required	☐	☐	

Health and Safety

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Floors free from slip hazards	☐	☐	
Walkways clear	☐	☐	
Good lighting provided	☐	☐	
First aid kit available	☐	☐	
Fire blanket available	☐	☐	
Fire extinguisher available where provided	☐	☐	
Emergency exits unobstructed	☐	☐	

Documentation

Inspection Item	Yes	No	Action Required
Food Safety Risk Assessment available	☐	☐	
Kitchen inspection records maintained	☐	☐	
Cleaning schedules available	☐	☐	
Temperature records maintained	☐	☐	

(where used)			
Volunteer training records available (where applicable)	☐	☐	

Defects, Concerns or Corrective Actions Required

Ref	Issue Identified	Priority (High/Medium/Low)	Action Required
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Inspection Outcome

- ☐ Satisfactory
☐ Satisfactory with Minor Actions Required
☐ Significant Issues Identified
☐ Food Preparation Should Be Suspended Pending Corrective Action

Inspector Declaration

I confirm that I have inspected the kitchen and food preparation facilities and recorded my findings accurately.

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Follow-Up Review

Reviewed By: _____

Reviewed Date: _____

Actions Completed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Further Action Required: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

Immediate Action Required If:

- No handwashing facilities are available
- Food is being stored at unsafe temperatures
- There is evidence of pest infestation
- Serious cleanliness concerns are identified
- Food beyond its use-by date is being retained for use
- Significant allergen risks cannot be managed
- Vital cooking or refrigeration equipment has failed

In these circumstances, consideration should be given to suspending food preparation and service until the issue has been resolved.

Appendix C: Allergen Information Record

Allergen Information Record

Purpose: This record should be used whenever food is prepared, served, sold or distributed on church premises. It helps ensure that information about allergens is available and can be provided accurately to consumers.

Food allergies can cause serious illness and, in some cases, may be life-threatening. Churches should take reasonable steps to identify allergens in food and ensure that information can be provided to anyone who asks. Food businesses must comply with allergen information requirements under food information legislation.

Church Details

Church Name: _____

Activity/Event: _____

Date: _____

Person Completing Record: _____

The 14 Major Allergens

Tick any allergens contained in the food item.

Allergen	Tick
Celery	☐
Cereals containing gluten (wheat, rye, barley, oats)	☐
Crustaceans	☐
Eggs	☐
Fish	☐
Lupin	☐
Milk	☐
Mustard	☐
Peanuts	☐
Sesame	☐
Soya	☐
Sulphur dioxide/sulphites	☐
Tree nuts	☐

Food Item Allergen Register

Complete for each food item being served

Food Item	Allergens Present	Prepared By	Checked By

Detailed Allergen Record

Food Item Name

Ingredients Used

Allergens Present

- ☐ Celery
- ☐ Cereals containing gluten
- ☐ Crustaceans
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Fish
- ☐ Lupin
- ☐ Milk
- ☐ Mustard
- ☐ Peanuts
- ☐ Sesame
- ☐ Soya
- ☐ Sulphur Dioxide/Suphites

☐ Tree Nuts

Risk of Cross-Contamination

Could the food come into contact with allergens during preparation, storage or service?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, provide details:

Food Supplier Information

Where purchased products are used, details should be retained.

Product	Supplier	Allergen Information Available	Yes/No

Consumer Information

How will allergen information be made available?

☐ Written allergen sheet

☐ Menu or display card

☐ Ingredient list available

☐ Verbal information by designated volunteer

☐ Combination of methods

If there is a combination of methods, please indicate below:

Volunteer Declaration

I confirm that the allergen information recorded above is accurate to the best of my knowledge and has been checked against ingredient information available at the time of preparation.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Event Coordinator/Responsible Person Review

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Allergy Incident Record

Complete if a concern, near miss or allergic reaction occurs.

Date: _____

Food Item: _____

Details of Incident:

Action Taken:

Further Action Required:

Good Practice Checklist

Before serving food, confirm that:

- ☐ Ingredients have been checked
- ☐ Allergens have been checked
- ☐ Recipes have been reviewed
- ☐ Volunteers understand allergen risks
- ☐ Cross-contamination risks have been considered
- ☐ Information can be provided to consumers
- ☐ Any changes to ingredients have been recorded
- ☐ Packaging and labels have been retained where appropriate