

Food Hygiene & Staff Training

- what every caterer should know about staff supervision, instruction and training regulations



To meet food safety regulations, adequate staff training is essential

Food Safety Regulations – understanding the law

With concerns over food safety on the increase and an alarming number of food poisoning cases attributed to food eaten outside of the home, it is essential that every caterer takes steps to ensure that all food handling staff are supervised and/or trained in food hygiene matters.

Failure to comply with regulations could result in prosecution and lead to a substantial fine or in extreme cases, to imprisonment. Bad publicity can ruin a food business and put an end to a person's livelihood, but at the end of the day food poisoning can kill. Therefore, effective staff training and supervision is of paramount importance, especially in an industry with such a high staff turnover of semi-skilled and unskilled kitchen staff.

Legislation regarding training encompasses food safety and hygiene, but you must not forget to make sure your staff are also aware of other issues, especially the use and storage guidelines for your cooking and refrigeration equipment. As storing and displaying food at too high a temperature is one of the most common causes of food poisoning, this is critical.

How to Comply with Legislation

The Food Hygiene Regulations 2006 require that the proprietor of a food business shall ensure that food handlers engaged in the food business are supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters commensurate with their work activities.

Therefore, any staff member handling food, whether open or packaged and including drinks and ice, should receive the supervision / instruction / training to a level suitable for their role. But how do you classify a position and make sure you meet the regulations?

Staff Categorisation

There are essentially three categories of food handlers that must be instructed and/or trained. These categories are calculated on the job of the individual and also on the type of food they handle. Those involved in the handling and preparation of 'high risk' foods will need more training than those only involved with 'low risk' items. The following table provides a useful guide:

Training Level Required

Staff level	Likely Job Title	Training level required			
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	
		'The Essentials of Food Hygiene'	Hygiene Awareness Instruction	Formal Training Level 1	Formal Training Level 2 and/or 3
Category A Handle low risk or wrapped food only	Storeman, waiter/waitress, bar staff, counter staff, servery assistant, cellarman, food delivery staff	Training required before starting work for the first time	Training required within 4 weeks of starting (8 weeks for part-time staff)	Not necessary	Not necessary
Category B Food handlers who prepare open, 'high risk' foods	Commis chef, cook, catering supervisor, kitchen assistant & bar staff who prepare food	Training required before starting work for the first time	Training required within 4 weeks of starting	Training required within 3 months of starting	Not necessary
Category C Food handlers who also have a supervisory role	Unit manager/supervisor, chef manager, bar/pub manager, chef, operations general manager, owner/operator of home/mobile catering business	Training required before starting work for the first time	Training required within 4 weeks of starting	Training required within 3 months of starting	Good practice (according to responsibilities)

Stage 1 – The Essentials of Food Hygiene

To comply with regulations, anyone handling food must receive written or verbal instruction in the Essentials of Food Hygiene before they start work at an establishment for the first time.

One way of ensuring you meet the regulations is to compile a simple in house training document. This need only take the form of a basic tick sheet using the key points below. You should then make sure that each food handler reads and signs it before they start in their new role, as part of a basic induction procedure.

Key points for staff to be made aware of:

- Keep yourself clean and wear clean clothing
- Always wash your hands thoroughly: before handling food, after using the toilet, handling raw foods or waste, before starting work, after every break and after blowing your nose
- Tell your supervisor before you start work of any skin, nose, throat, stomach or bowel trouble or infected wound. You are breaking the law if you do not
- Ensure cuts and sores are covered with a waterproof, high visibility dressing
- Avoid unnecessary handling of food
- Do not smoke, eat or drink in a food room, and never cough or sneeze over food
- If you see something wrong – tell your supervisor
- Do not prepare food too far in advance of service
- Keep perishable food either refrigerated or piping hot
- Keep the preparation of raw and cooked food strictly separate
- When reheating food ensure it gets piping hot
- Clean as you go. Keep all equipment and surfaces clean
- Follow any food safety instructions provided either on food packaging or from your supervisor.

Stage 2 – Hygiene Awareness Instruction

All staff must also have this level of instruction as soon as possible after starting in a food-handling role. For full time staff this should be within 4 weeks and for part time staff within 8 weeks.

This level of training should help staff to develop knowledge of the basic principles of food hygiene, but needs to be made relevant to the individual's role. Focus should be placed on instructing staff how to carry out their job hygienically to ensure food safety including any control or monitoring processes your business has outlined as part of HACCP. To guarantee you meet your legal training requirements, you should ensure that all staff are trained on the issues following and that a training log or folder is completed and signed for each staff member.

Key points must include:

- Your business policy and the priority placed on food hygiene
- "Germs" and how these have the potential to cause illness
- Personal health and hygiene including the need for high standards, reporting illnesses and rules on smoking
- Cross contamination – cause and prevention
- Food storage – protection and temperature control
- Waste disposal, cleaning and disinfection detailing materials, methods and storage
- The risks of 'foreign body' contamination and how to avoid
- Awareness of pests.

Stage 3 – Formal Training

Category B and C staff should also have completed formal training to Level 1 which develops a level of understanding of the basic principles of food hygiene. This course is commonly known as the Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene (formerly the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate.)

Courses are accredited and run by several organisations including The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and The Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene (RIPHH). These are held at various centres throughout the UK and are available in several languages. To find out about courses in your area, visit www.cieh.org/training or email examinations@riph.org.uk

Larger establishments and organisations may be able to establish their own in-house training to educate staff, providing the trainers themselves are adequately trained and that training is carried out to an appropriate standard to satisfy the legal requirements. Contact the CIEH or RIPHH for more information.

The Foundation Certificate in Food Hygiene course covers the following areas:

- Food poisoning micro-organisms types and sources
- Simple microbiology, toxins, spores, growth & death
- Premises and equipment
- Common food hazards including physical, chemical and microbiological
- Personal hygiene – basic rules and responsibilities
- Preventing food contamination
- Food poisoning – symptoms and causes
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Legal obligations
- Pest control
- Effective temperature control of food e.g. storage, thawing, reheating and cooking.



Best Practice

So far, we have summarised the minimum steps you must take to ensure you meet with the legal requirements of current legislation. However, it is always advisable to follow industry best practice advice especially since the 'due diligence' defence requires you to prove that you have taken all reasonable steps to meet the regulations.

HACCP, staff training plans and temperature control training are all standard practice in many reputable catering outlets. It would be wise to follow these procedures to ensure your statutory obligations are met. Although they are not currently specifically mentioned in legislation on training, they will ensure you meet the 'due diligence' test.

The 2006 regulations require that all catering space outlets, irrespective of size, monitor HACCP to conform with their policy of 'Safer Food, Better Business' (SFBB). Requirements differ according to outlet size with full HACCP processes required for larger businesses. SFBB covers policy for all smaller catering businesses, for more information, visit www.food.gov.uk/safereating

HACCP/SFBB

You should already have all of your HACCP processes and procedures in place. It is particularly important to ensure that your staff has a good knowledge of these. For detailed guidance on all aspects of HACCP, see the HACCP Foster Blue Paper in this series.

Training Plans

The recording of training activity is advisable, but not essential. However, if you can prove that every member of your staff has been trained to a level appropriate to their role this could be vital in attempting to establish a 'due diligence' defence.

A training plan will also ensure that any weaknesses are identified and will make sure that any change in role will lead to the necessary instruction and/or training. Ideally, a simple training form should be signed by both parties on completion of each training session and a record should be kept for every employee.

Follow industry best practice

Make the most out of your staff and your business will reap the rewards

Temperature Control Training

Poor understanding of temperature control is one of the key causes of food borne illness and all staff, especially those in Category B and C, should fully understand temperature requirements. Although this is not currently required legally, it is anticipated that legislation will become more stringent in this area over the next few years.

To meet standard industry best practice, you should take steps to make sure that staff are aware of which foods are subject to existing legislation. Foods which need temperature control need to kept either Hot at above 63°C or Cold at below 8°C. The table below is a useful guide to run through when training your staff. The full implications of the legal requirements are explained in the Foster Blue Paper entitled 'Food Temperature Laws'.

Product Group	Products	Classification
Dairy Products	Including milk, yoghurt, cream, food with a cream filling, dairy-based desserts and certain cheeses.	Must be kept chilled unless the packaging states they are 'stable' at room temperature
Cooked Products	Foods containing eggs, meat, fish, dairy products, cereals, rice, pulses or vegetables and sandwiches containing any of these.	Must be kept chilled until ready to be eaten cold or heated.
Smoked/cured ready-to-eat meat or fish	Including sliced cured meats like ham.	Must be kept chilled until ready to be eaten cold or heated, unless the curing method means it is not perishable at room temperature.
Prepared ready-to-eat foods	Including prepared vegetables, bags of salad leaves, vegetable salads such as coleslaw and products containing mayonnaise.	Must be kept chilled.
Uncooked or partly cooked pastry and dough products	Including pizzas and fresh pasta containing meat, fish or vegetables.	Must be kept chilled until heated. Food labels will generally state if they need temperature control for this group.
Room temperature foods	Including some cured/smoked products and certain bakery products.	Do not need to be kept chilled.
Preserved foods	Including canned and dried foods, jams, pickles and sauces.	Do not need to be kept chilled until opened when they become perishable at room temperature.
Room temperature ripe/mature foods	Including soft or mould-ripened cheeses/	Do not need to be kept chilled until fully ripened or matured when they must be chilled when stored or displayed.
Raw food for further processing (including cooking)	Including fresh meat, fish and shellfish.	Do not need to be kept chilled unless it is intended to be eaten raw ie sushi.

Exceptions:

The following are not covered by the temperature control guidelines above:

1. Food displayed in restaurants or cafes, in buffets, or served and displayed in shops can be kept out of temperature control for up to four hours but only for one period of service or display. Afterwards any food that is left must be thrown away or chilled until final use.
2. In Scotland, the regulations differ as a maximum temperature for chilling is not specified but businesses are still required to chill foods if they need to be chilled to keep them safe.
3. Food can also be kept unchilled for a limited time when it is being loaded or unloaded from a refrigerated vehicle to be delivered to/from food premises.
4. Where there are unavoidable circumstances, for example when food has to be handled during and after processing, or if equipment is defrosted or temporarily breaks down, food can be kept unchilled for a limited time.

Contacts

To ensure that your business keeps fully up to date with current legislation, caterers should check out the following on a regular basis:

www.cieh.org

www.riph.org.uk

www.food.gov.uk

Copies of the current legislation are available from www.tsoshop.co.uk

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
Handling and Serving Ice
Safe Food Storage
HACCP- Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points
The Safe Way to Blast Chill, Freeze and Thaw
Inspection by Environmental Health Practitioners
Plan for a Catering Crisis
Fire Ratings & Coldroom Panels

For copies of our other Blue Papers, visit www.fosterrefrigerator.co.uk/food_safety or call 0500 691122



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