

Maintaining Food Safety in a Commercial Kitchen

This fact sheet provides information and advice for industries running a commercial kitchen in the event of a disruption to the gas or electricity supply.

Coping without gas may mean changing your usual systems for preparation and cooking of food. The following tips have been written to minimise the risks of a food poisoning incident in your business in the event of a disruption to supply.

Inevitably you will be much busier as everything will take that much longer—**but**—food safety should still be a primary consideration. So:

- Take the time to keep your staff informed with regards any new procedures and involve them in the production planning—don't assume your staff will know what to do;
- If you have to close for a period of time don't be tempted to use out of date stock—'if in doubt throw it out'; and
- If you are at all in doubt about whether you have the right equipment to safely produce and serve certain high risk menu items for your customers—don't serve them—change the options on the menu.

Personal Hygiene Tips for Staff

Cold water and anti-bactericidal soap can be used to wash hands safely. To avoid the spread of bacteria ensure all staff regularly wash their hands:

- Before preparing foods;
- After visiting the toilet;
- Between handling raw and cooked foods;
- After handling rubbish or cleaning;
- After touching any part of the body or after using a handkerchief;
- After smoking.

Preparing Food—'Just in Time'

Best practice food handling procedures need to be maintained during a disruption to the gas or electricity supply:

- Avoid preparing too far in advance, where possible cook and serve immediately;
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate;
- Clean work areas as you go with cold or warm water using detergent, and sanitise regularly; and
- Soak chopping boards, knives and other utensils in a sink of cold water to which two teaspoons of household bleach have been added for at least of 15 minutes.

Thawing Food

Special care needs to be taken when thawing foods:

- Only use the microwave to defrost foods if they are going to be cooked immediately;
- Avoid using the microwave to defrost large items such as frozen cuts of meat; and
- Do not cook joints of meat, meat products or poultry from frozen, ensure they are thoroughly defrosted in the refrigerator before cooking.

Hot holding

Inadequate hot holding can contribute to food poisoning:

- If your equipment is unable to maintain food at 60° C or above when hot holding—avoid hot holding altogether;
- Don't use hot holding equipment to cook or reheat food; and
- Don't overload hot-holding equipment.

Re-heating

Reheating of pre cooked foods must be thorough to ensure food safety. If your equipment is unable to reheat food to the correct temperature—avoid re-heating altogether.

- Pre cooked foods should be reheated to an internal temperature of 77°C–82°C for at least 15 seconds; and
- Food reheated in a microwave should be reheated to an internal temperature of 90°C and left to stand for at least 2 minutes after re-heating.

Stopping Cross Contamination

New equipment and procedures may change the flow of food in the kitchen and increase the risk of cross-contamination. Bacteria cannot move by themselves, but are transferred from the source of the bacteria either directly or indirectly. Avoid:

- Storing raw meat above cooked food in a refrigerator/cold holding unit; and
- Using the same slicers, knives, tongs, cleaning cloths, food handlers, preparation surfaces and chopping boards for cooked and raw foods.

Transporting foods

Victorian Legislation Restricts the Use of Domestic Kitchens for Production of Food for Sale.

Food moved from one registered premise must be kept under hygienic conditions and at an appropriate temperature during transport.

The right combination of time and temperature control is a critical issue in ensuring safe food production.

The main time and temperature risks of cooking in domestic kitchens are:

- Domestic cooking equipment may not have the capacity to cook the food to the required internal temperature;
- Cooling hot food down to 5°C within 4 hours may not be possible in a domestic refrigerator; and

- The right commercial equipment (e.g. hotboxes and eskys) is necessary to maintain the appropriate temperature of the food up until the point of service.

Avoiding Food Poisoning

Food Poisoning Can Be Avoided by Good Food Handling Practices and Procedures.

Remember—Bacteria Multiply on Most Foods if Given the Chance, Particularly Between 5°C And 60°C.

Protect your customers and yourself through avoiding the following bad practices:

- Under cooking meat and meat products;
- Preparing food too far in advance;
- Holding food at room temperature for long periods;
- Cooling food too slowly before refrigeration;
- Inadequate hot-holding and re-heating;
- Poor staff hygiene;
- Thawing frozen meat and poultry for insufficient time;
- Cross contaminating cooked foods with raw foods; and
- Using contaminated ingredients or food from unsafe sources.

Further Advice and Information

- Other DHS Fact Sheets
- Brochure (available at major supermarkets)
- On healthy eating: contact your General Practitioner, community health service or maternal and child health nurse.
- On safe food handling; contact your local council or Food Safety Victoria on 1300 364 352