

CATERERS FOOD SAFETY FACT SHEET



To ensure catering businesses based in the Blue Mountains area meet all appropriate food safety and hygiene requirements, business operators are required to contact Council and, subject to meeting the relevant criteria, be registered to operate a food catering business.

The focus of this public health initiative is directed to those businesses wishing to or currently providing catering to weddings, parties, school formals, corporate functions and similar celebrations in halls, gardens, parks, residences, or commercial premises.

These requirements apply to all food catering businesses in the Blue Mountains, including spit roast caterers operating from a butcher shop or domestic premises, in addition to those operating from a restaurant or café or the like and are known to Council.

To meet all the relevant food safety and hygiene requirements of the Food Standards Code and be subsequently approved by Council to carry out home or corporate catering, a business operator is required to lodge a written application with Council which includes the following information:

- Details of the business address of the catering activity and of any development consent or approval issued by Council for the commercial premises or home occupation.
- Confirmation that the business operator is the owner of the base premises and if not, that the consent of the owner is provided.
- That the base premises used for food preparation is connected to the sewerage system.
- A management plan of the catering business including:
 - The types of functions and the anticipated number of guests involved.
 - Details of menus.
 - Cooking and food storage/holding facilities for hot and cold foods.
 - Details of hand and crockery/ cutlery/ equipment washing facilities.
 - Food transportation details including the vehicle/s involved.
 - Food reheating or cooling facilities, if appropriate.
 - The standard method of food preparation and serving at each function.
 - Details of standard operating procedures to avoid cross contamination of food/s.
 - Staff training details (including a copy of your Food Safety Supervisor certification) pertinent to all food handlers and supervisors having appropriate skills and knowledge in food safety and food hygiene in accordance with the catering business.

BLUE MOUNTAINS
CITY COUNCIL

2 Civic Place
Locked Bag 1005
KATOOMBA NSW 2780

Phone: (02) 4780 5000
Fax: (02) 4780 5555
E-mail: council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Council's Environmental Health
Officers can be contacted between
the hours of 8.30am and 5.00pm
Monday to Friday.



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An application will involve an inspection, by a Council Officer at a mutually convenient time, of the base premises including all appropriate facilities and equipment outlined in the management plan.

Each retail food business within the Blue Mountains Area is subject to an annual administration fee along with a routine food safety inspection. The fee charged for each inspection may vary from business to business depending on the type of business, and the food sold in addition to the number of food outlets within the premises. For example, large hotels may have a number of kitchens and or bars and when compared to a small restaurant or a coffee shop, the time taken to inspect the respective premises will vary and hence the variable fee schedule.

This fee is reviewed each financial year and is subject to change according to Council's approved fees and charges.

Guidelines in food safety for caterers

Food poisoning outbreaks can occur when caterers don't handle, cook or store food properly. Facilities that are ill-equipped or unsuitable for the food being prepared is a common catering problem that often leads to food poisoning.

Causes of food poisoning

The following common catering mistakes can allow the growth of bacteria which causes food poisoning:

- undercooking of raw foods such as meat and poultry — bacteria can survive as a result of inadequate cooking;
- slow reheating and slow cooking under low heat — provides the ideal temperature (20°C to 50°C) for bacteria to grow;
- improper cooling — allows food to stay too long at the ideal temperature for bacteria to grow (need to cool food from 60°C down to 21°C within 2 hours then 21°C down to 5°C within another four hours);
- cooking food too far in advance — increases the chance of food becoming contaminated with bacteria;
- not storing food properly and incorrect temperatures for transportation, storage and displays — allows the growth of bacteria;
- poor personal hygiene from food handlers — can lead to contamination of food through dirty hands, coughing, cross contamination etc;
- Not sanitising food contact surfaces after cleaning.

Use adequate catering facilities

Food preparation areas as well as all cooking and refrigeration facilities must be suitable for the volume of food being prepared.

Catering premises should adhere to the standards by ensuring flooring and work surfaces in food preparation and storage areas are smooth, impervious and easily cleanable, have adequate hand washing and refrigeration facilities, and must be designed to exclude pests and vermin.



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Store and transport food safely

Another common cause of food poisoning is inadequate handling and storage of food that's been prepared at one site and transported and served elsewhere.

Food must be maintained at the appropriate storage temperature during delivery to another site. Transport vehicles should be designed and constructed in accordance with NSW legislation.

There needs to be adequate hot or cold storage, and display unit capacity, so food can be stored at the appropriate temperature—less than 5°C for cold food, above 60°C for hot food.

All food must be adequately protected (enclosed or covered) when stored or displayed to prevent contamination by dust, insects or other sources. This is especially important if catering for outdoor events, especially during summer when flies can be a problem. It is important to protect food and utensils from contamination.

Cook food properly

Food poisoning outbreaks can occur when food is not cooked properly.

Thaw frozen foods completely before cooking, especially large cuts of meat or poultry which may not cook right through if they haven't been fully thawed. Frozen food should only be thawed in a refrigerator or a microwave oven before cooking, and not left on the bench to thaw.

Food must be cooked to the appropriate internal core temperature to destroy bacteria and make it safe. This is particularly important for meat (71°C), poultry (74°C) and seafood (63°C). Once cooked, food should be held at a temperature above 60°C or cooled to below 5°C as quickly as possible.

Partially cooked meat must—for the final cooking stage—reach its appropriate internal core temperature before being served. Other cooked food must be reheated to these temperatures before being placed in a hot holding device (e.g. Bain marie).

Caterers should use an accurate probe thermometer to check that correct cooking temperatures are reached. The probe should be sanitised before and after use, and all final cooking temperatures recorded.

The key is to cook food in small enough batches to allow it all to reach a high enough temperature. Also, reducing portion size by using shallow dishes instead of large pots allows food to cool or heat more rapidly and thoroughly.

Avoid cross contamination

Caterers should handle raw meat separately from ready-to-eat food to avoid cross contamination with bacteria.

Where possible, use separate equipment and utensils (knives, tongs, cutting boards etc) for raw and ready-to-eat food, or clean and sanitise thoroughly between each use. A chemical sanitiser is needed for sanitising utensils. A separate container may be required for rinsing.

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Train staff in food safety and personal hygiene

Food handlers must be adequately trained in food safety and personal hygiene.

Basic personal hygiene practices include:

- thoroughly washing and drying hands before handling food, and after:
 - visiting the toilet
 - blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing
 - Smoking
 - handling raw food or waste
- wearing clean outer clothing when handling food
- using clean disposable gloves when handling food
- tying back long hair or wearing a cap
- covering cuts, sores or skin breaks with clean waterproof dressings and a disposable plastic glove.

Even though it is not a legal requirement to wear gloves, the use of bare hands to handle ready-to-eat food is not recommended. Using tongs or disposable gloves can reduce the risk of contamination of ready-to-eat food. Disposable gloves will only be effective if they are changed regularly, and always after coming into contact with anything that might be contaminated.

Food handlers must inform employers if they have any skin, nose, throat or bowel infections. If suffering any of these conditions they must not handle food.

More information

- Visit the NSW Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry or phone the helpline on 1300 552 406
- Visit Food Standards Australia New Zealand website at www.foodstandards.gov.au.

Note

This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the Food Act 2003 (NSW).