

Food Safety Series (No.10)

April 2019

Food Safety Guidance for Departmental Christmas Parties

WEB VERSION



When planning departmental Christmas parties the safest option is to source the catering from either a University outlet or an external caterer. When using external caterers you are advised to use only those listed with the University. If you decide to opt for a non-preferred University supplier you take on the responsibility should there be a food poisoning incident.

People are to be discouraged from bringing in their own food to share as there is a certain amount of risk attached to any self-catering. Where this does occur the person who prepared it must provide a full list of ingredients to ensure allergen information is available. In addition it would be wise to have a sign stating that home made foods cannot be guaranteed to be completely free from traces of nuts and other allergens.

Cross-contamination is a major cause of food poisoning. Cross-contamination can occur when bacteria are spread from uncooked foods, or from pets, hands, dirty cloths and so on, onto prepared food, and can result in food poisoning outbreaks.

If a department chooses to cater for themselves by purchasing food from supermarkets to prepare their own buffet or on a “bring and share” basis there are some precautions to follow and issues to bear in mind - **Big functions, big responsibilities.**

Catering for parties and functions may mean that there are large quantities of cooked and uncooked food competing for fridge, freezer and cooker space. This not only puts food at risk of cross contamination but also puts extra demand on refrigeration units which may struggle to maintain the correct temperature.

It is essential you plan your cooking and food storage carefully before you begin. A wide range of foods including e.g.

meat/poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, rice etc. can cause food poisoning if not handled and stored properly.

To cater safely for functions it is essential to have sufficient facilities and controls - if you do not then **don't do it at all!**

RULES TO FOLLOW

- **Do** purchase foods from a reputable supplier and keep receipts. Do not purchase foods too far in advance and always check ‘use by dates’ and ensure packaging is intact.. Check labels for allergens so you able to confirm if any if any of the dishes contain allergens.
- **Do** use cool boxes where possible to transport cold food to the venue. Ensure raw and cooked foods are kept separate during transport and minimise time to venue (maximum 90 minutes).
- **Do** ensure all foods are stored correctly asap.
- **Do** keep raw and cooked or ready to eat foods separate at all times and use separate utensils etc.
- **Do** wash hands frequently while preparing food, and always between handling raw and cooked foods.
- **Do** wash your hands thoroughly in hot soapy water and dry properly before touching food, and especially after using the toilet; handling dirty cloths, the dustbin.
- **Do** ensure all dishes, worktops and cutlery etc are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before use.
- **Do** not allow anyone who has, or has recently had, diarrhoea or vomiting in the kitchen or to be involved in food handling. Cover any cuts or grazes with a waterproof dressing.

- **Do** keep cold foods in the fridge when you are not using them. Make sure you have the capacity to keep food cool below 8°C. Don't leave food out in a warm office all day.
- **Do** thaw frozen meat/poultry fully, ideally in the bottom of the fridge on a plate to catch any drips, before cooking.
- **Do** ensure when preparing raw meats the work surfaces and utensils are cleaned and disinfected before using for ready to eat foods.
- **Do** cook food thoroughly, above 75°C to kill bacteria that could cause food poisoning, using a cleaned and calibrated probe .
- **Do** cool cooked foods completely before putting them in the fridge. Try to cool foods within an hour and a half of cooking and protect the food from risk of contamination at all times.
- **Do** throw away any cold food that has been standing at room temperature for more than 4 hours and any hot food that has been standing at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- **Do** ensure any special diets catered for are kept separate; covered and any manufacturers ingredient labels retained . Where there is doubt discuss with the allergic person - do not guess / assume.
- **Do not** prepare food too far in advance.
- **Do not** allow raw meat or defrosting food to drip onto cooked or prepared foods. Keep these raw items at the bottom of the fridge and protect the salad tray.
- **Do not** use dirty cloths. Keep plenty of clean ones handy and use disposable towels for drying.

- **Do not** fill the fridge with wines, beers and soft drinks. While these may taste better cold, they do not need to be refrigerated. If space is short, keep them in separate ice buckets or cold water so that you can keep available fridge space for perishable items.
- **Do not** overload your fridge. Its efficiency will suffer if the cooling air circulating inside cannot flow freely. Use a fridge thermometer to check its temperature (should be below 5°C).
- **Do not** use ice from laboratory ice makers.
- **Do not** store or prepare food or drink in a laboratory or workshop area. All food and drink must be stored away from chemicals and biological agents.
- **Do not** reheat cooked food more than once. Make sure it is piping hot throughout before serving.
- All rubbish must be removed at the end of the day.

Note Those responsible for preparing or cooking food should have an understanding of food hygiene and ideally be trained to level 2 food safety and as a minimum should read this leaflet.

Further Information and Training

- Food Standards Agency website www.food.gov.uk
- Allergy Awareness guidance www.food.gov.uk/safereating/allergyinto/guide/caterers/
- More general Christmas safety guidance for office parties www.worksmart.org.uk/officeparty/officepartyplanner.pdf

- Other leaflets in the Food Safety Series
- General Food Safety queries (www.masenv.co.uk/fsq)

Other leaflets in the Food Safety Guidance Notes Series

- 1 **Food Safety** – An introduction to legislation for University premises
- 2 **Catering Options** - A guide for departments and faculties
- 3 **Staff Kitchens and Tearooms** – General hygiene requirements
- 4 **Food Hygiene Training Requirements**
- 5 **Guidance on Departmental Barbecue Safety**
- 6 **Purchase, Delivery and Storage of Food**
- 7 **Preparation and Service of Food**
- 8 **Personal Hygiene Requirements for Individuals Preparing or Serving Food**
- 9 **Cleaning and Pest Control in Food Preparation Areas**
- 11 **Food Safety for Charity Events** – A guide for departments and faculties
- 12 **Food Complaints** - A guide for departments and University operated food outlets
- 13 **Allergens**

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