

Food Safety

Introduction

If you are going to do a lot of cooking, whether that be for your loved ones, for a charity event or a family party, you should consider your responsibility towards those that are to consume your food.

If you are cooking for other people, you have a duty of care to them, and potentially some legal exposure if you negligently cause someone to become unwell.

A food safety training course may be well worth the little effort required. These can be done in your own time, at your own pace, at a low cost.

Many venues such as community halls, bowls clubs or golf clubs will not permit you to do your own catering for an event unless you have formal food safety training and/or Public Liability Insurance.

You need to consider safety in many areas of providing food for others:

- Selecting and Storing Ingredients
- Preparing to Cook
- Cooking
- Packing
- Chilling
- Freezing
- Storing
- Transporting
- Heating
- Serving

You also need to consider:

- Kitchen Layout & Facilities
- Equipment and Utensils
- Storage
- Pest Control
- Cloths and Cleaning
- Other people "helping"

It's not as complicated as it sounds – and a lot of it is common sense. I would still recommend some formal training (and Certification).

Food safety and hygiene for Private Parties

Providing food safely for a large amount of people without any previous food handling experience or training is an undertaking that is not recommended to any event organiser.

Every year, people who are not used to catering for large numbers, hire halls and organise big private parties or functions. Food is often prepared in several private houses by several individuals well in advance of the event and then separately transported to the venue.

What are acceptable practices in your kitchen for your own family at home, are not acceptable when catering on a large scale.

Safe food preparation, handling and transportation should be your number one priority along with the health of all your guests.

If food is contaminated or bacteria are given a chance to multiply, it might turn out to be a "night to remember" for all the wrong reasons! A food poisoning outbreak can be disruptive for all the households involved.

We've probably all seen high profile cases of food poisoning in the news and the devastating effect that has on families, if you are in any doubt about providing catering safely, leave well alone and hire a professional caterer.

For those saying "we've always done the catering in the past" and "we've never had any problems" we would warn against complacency!

Links to free food safety publications, and up to date news covering all aspects of food hygiene are available from the Local Authority or the internet.

Your Local Authority or Food Standards Agency will have resources online that can help.

Search online for "Food Safety Training". In 2022 there were dozens of on-line courses offered – some for as little as £10 and 90 minutes of your time! Ok, not comprehensive training but a start.