

Preparing and distributing food on behalf of Mothers' Union

Food includes anything that an individual can consume including drinks. Public includes people for whom you are catering on behalf of Mothers' Union.

Preparing food for public consumption follow strict guidelines and these are given in the Food Standards Act (FSA) and is regulated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Every individual or organisation embarking on preparing food for public consumption should read the act [The Food Safety Act 1990](#) as amended, to ensure that they understand and comply with its requirements.

The FSA primarily deals with those who prepare food on a regular basis for consumption by the public. If you are one of these individuals or organisation, there are some regulations you must follow. As a starting point discuss your intentions with your local council and follow their advice. They are the regulators of the FSA in your area. You can find your [local council](#) here.

Some of the areas the local council will look at are briefly discussed below, please note that these are guidelines only and you should always follow the advice of your local council.

- You may be required to register **ALL** your premises where the food is prepared with the local council. There are timescales attached to this registration.
- The local council can inspect the kitchen where you prepare the food to ensure that you are following the requirements and guidelines of the act.
- Food preparation should adhere to certain processes. These include cleanliness of everything that comes into contact with the food preparation and distribution, storing and transporting food and dealing with leftovers and the temperature the food should be cooked and stored.
- It could be a requirement of your local council that you hold a 'Food and Hygiene Certificate'. Even if this is not a requirement, it is worth undertaking the training if you prepare food for public consumption.
- Always label your food with its name, your address, list of ingredients, use by/best before date and details of how it should be consumed if relevant, such as reheating. As a minimum you should always state produced date and a recommended consume within date.
- If your food can be consumed by people who have allergies or particular health or other needs, you must always ensure they are made aware of how you have purchased and prepared the food. For instance your food might not have nuts in it, but could have been produced/prepared or packed where it could have come into contact with nuts.
- If the food you are preparing is for consumption by vulnerable people, or people who have a need to be careful with what they eat, then you should consult the FSA for advice before embarking on food preparation for this group. Vulnerable people on this instance will include the elderly, children under 5 years of age, expectant mothers, and those with medical conditions which require them to avoid certain types of food.

If you are not preparing food for public consumption on a **regular basis**, or providing hot food, or food for under 5 year old, you do not have to adhere to the Food Safety Regulations. It is hard to pinpoint what 'regular basis' could mean. As a guide if you prepare food on a monthly basis or more frequently and/or for events that are recurring, such as lunch clubs or meals on wheels, then you should ask your local council for advice. This advice is free and will give you peace of mind while keeping you and your organisation on the right side of the law.

If you are preparing food on an irregular/infrequent basis, then current advice is that you do not have to register your premises with the local council. However, if you produce food for public consumption,

then it is worthwhile asking your local council for advice on how you should undertake your food preparation and distribution. Below are some basic good practise guidelines worth following

- Before starting clean and disinfect the area and utensils you will use to prepare the food.
- Wear clean appropriate clothes that will not aid contamination; ensure your hair is covered/held back to prevent it from falling into the food. Remove jewellery that can come into contact with food and cover cuts with waterproof catering standard dressing to avoid infection being passed. Keep unwanted visitors, especially pets out of the food preparation area. Avoid making food for others if you are suffering from skin conditions or illnesses that can cause spreading infection.
- Make sure you use fresh good quality ingredients that are well within their use by/ best before date and ensure ingredients are stored separately before cooking to avoid cross contaminated with other foods, which could cause allergic reactions.
- Always wash your hands before starting and as often as needed during the preparation and also all ingredients that need to be washed before use. As far as possible avoid touching the ingredients with your hands during preparation and serving.
- Take particular care to keep perishable and food that need refrigeration in temperatures recommended for their safekeeping and use these as soon as possible. Never refreeze food that have been frozen and thawed before.
- Cook different types of food separately. Make sure you clean work surfaces and utensils after each use to avoid contamination between different types of food, especially between raw food and cooked food.
- As far as possible ensure the preparation process is done with minimum delay to minimise food from being overexposed or its freshness/condition unnecessarily deteriorate. Never let food stand open or exposed for periods of time than is necessary.
- Once prepared, keep different food separate, stored in clean food-grade containers with tight fitting lids and at temperatures where they will be safe to consume. Always keep food covered and uncooked food separate to cooked food. Always transport food covered, quickly using clean methods of transportation.
- Make sure all leftover food are disposed of or stored in a manner so that their shelf life is preserved.
- Label the food with details of the maker, date of preparation, a best before date and a list of ingredients used. Disclose any advice on the packaging of the ingredients to consumers. It is better to over inform, so give as much information as possible.
- Never produce food which requires raw eggs.
- Food can be classed as '[low risk foods](#)' such as cakes, biscuits and jams which normally carry a 'best before' date or as '[high risk foods](#)', such as ready to eat cooked foods, dairy products, soups and rice which normally require controlled temperature and will carry a 'use by' date. You should take particular care when preparing food classes as 'high risk food'.

Below are some useful websites, which offer more information.

- [Guidance on the application of EU food hygiene law to community and charity food provision](#)
- [Catering advice for charity and community groups providing food](#)
- [Food Standards Act 1999](#)
- [Food Safety Your Responsibility](#)