



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

UOW SAFE@WORK

SAFE FOOD HANDLING GUIDELINES

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1 Introduction / Background

There are times throughout the University year where faculties and divisions may have cause to serve food at a variety of functions ranging from a BBQ farewelling a staff member to an opening of an exhibition. Clubs and Societies also play an important role in our UOW community, and fundraising events such as Sausage Sizzles and Cake Stalls are a major contribution to the work of the community. Food hygiene on field trips is essential to minimise intestinal upsets. Procedures appropriate to each field trip form part of the scope of work for that trip. Whenever food is served, no one wants people to get sick or be responsible for causing others to become sick from the food that is served / sold at these events.

In Australia, the food law places many responsibilities on the proprietor of a food business. If you are the organiser of an event or an official of a charity or community organisation that is selling food, you need to be aware of these responsibilities. If you understand your legal responsibilities and plan your events properly, complying with the law is straightforward.

The Food Safety Standards, which apply to Australia only, include requirements for the handling, storage, transport and display of food. A copy of the Food Safety Standards is available from the ANZFA website at www.foodstandards.gov.au.

In the Standards, a food business (regardless of whether the business, enterprise or activity concerned is of a commercial, charitable or community nature or whether it involves the handling or sale of food on one occasion only) is identified as a business, enterprise or activity (other than primary food production) that involves:

- the handling of food for sale, or
- the sale of food.

This definition of a 'food business' includes all food activities involved in fundraising, including preparation of the food before it is sold. The definition of 'sale' covers fundraising activities. Food has been sold even if you just ask for a donation.

2 Scope / Purpose

This guideline has been prepared to help staff and students understand the health and hygiene requirements under the Food Safety Standards for the safe preparation of foods served or sold on campus and for the preparation and serving of meals on field trips.

3 What Sections are Applicable

The following decision path leads you through the different types of events. Next to each question is a list headings containing the information that you need to consider for your activity.

The event / field trip organiser should read the requirements that are relevant to the type of event being held, and should ensure that the people helping with the event also read them.

Type	Requirements
Barbeque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills and Knowledge ▪ Preparing and cooking food ▪ Health and Hygiene for Food Handlers
Self stable foods e.g. cakes, slices and biscuits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labelling ▪ Health and Hygiene for Food Handlers
Field work: Preparing meals at the same place they will be consumed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills and Knowledge ▪ Temperature Control ▪ Preparing and Cooking Food ▪ Barbeques ▪ Take the following precautions at sausage sizzles and barbecues to ensure that food is safe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ finish preparing raw meat before leaving for the site such as slicing, marinating or skewering ▪ pack raw meat into insulated boxes with ice bricks for transportation ▪ handle food with tongs or other equipment. Use separate equipment to handle raw and cooked meats. Hands should not be used unless absolutely necessary, and then hand washing facilities must be available. Hands must be washed after handling raw meats (see section 12) ▪ keep cooked meat and salads separate from raw meat at all times to prevent contamination. ▪ cover food to protect it from contamination ▪ use clean and dry utensils for serving the food – never place cooked meat back on the trays that held the raw meat ▪ always use separate utensils for cooked meat, uncooked meat and salads ▪ cook chicken, sausages and hamburgers until juices run clear - steaks can be cooked to preference ▪ throw left-over food away unless refrigeration equipment is available to rapidly cool the food ▪ wherever possible, single-use (disposable) utensils such as knives, forks, plates and cups should be used and thrown away after use. ▪ Transporting Food ▪ Catering for Field Trips ▪ Health and Hygiene for Food Handlers

<p>Field work: Preparing meals offsite & transporting the food to another place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills and Knowledge ▪ Temperature Control ▪ Preparing and Cooking Food ▪ Barbeques ▪ Take the following precautions at sausage sizzles and barbecues to ensure that food is safe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ finish preparing raw meat before leaving for the site such as slicing, marinating or skewering ▪ pack raw meat into insulated boxes with ice bricks for transportation ▪ handle food with tongs or other equipment. Use separate equipment to handle raw and cooked meats. Hands should not be used unless absolutely necessary, and then hand washing facilities must be available. Hands must be washed after handling raw meats (see section 12) ▪ keep cooked meat and salads separate from raw meat at all times to prevent contamination. ▪ cover food to protect it from contamination ▪ use clean and dry utensils for serving the food – never place cooked meat back on the trays that held the raw meat ▪ always use separate utensils for cooked meat, uncooked meat and salads ▪ cook chicken, sausages and hamburgers until juices run clear - steaks can be cooked to preference ▪ throw left-over food away unless refrigeration equipment is available to rapidly cool the food ▪ wherever possible, single-use (disposable) utensils such as knives, forks, plates and cups should be used and thrown away after use. ▪ Transporting Food ▪ Health and Hygiene for Food Handlers
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4 Skills and Knowledge

The Food Safety Standards require proprietors of food businesses to ensure that food handlers and supervisors of food handlers have the skills and knowledge they need to handle food safely.

This means that food handlers and supervisors must have the 'skills' to do those tasks that are necessary to ensure the safety of the food being handled and 'knowledge' of food safety and hygiene matters. For example, a food handler who is responsible for cooling cooked food must have the knowledge that the food must be cooled within a certain time to ensure it remains safe and the skills to do this (for example, by placing the food in shallow containers for cooling).

The event organiser should ensure that all food handlers and supervisors have the skills and knowledge they need to handle food safely. This includes activities involving:

- selling potentially hazardous foods that have not been cooked, such as salads or cream cakes, or
- selling potentially hazardous foods that are not served immediately after cooking, such as when food is pre-cooked and then heated for sale.

The event organiser should first determine if the food handlers and supervisors already have the skills and knowledge, as some may have previously received food safety training. If training is needed, the event organiser will need to work out the best way of providing this training. Refer to the [NSW food authorities](#) website for a list of registered training organisations.

However, charities and community organisations (for example, UOW Clubs and Societies) are exempt from this requirement if:

- there is no personal financial gain, that is, all the moneys raised are used for charitable or community purposes; and
- the food sold is shelf-stable (for example, biscuits, cakes without cream, jams or chutneys); or
- the food is consumed immediately after thorough cooking (for example, sausages sold straight from the barbecue).

This means that in the above circumstances, the event organiser does not need to ensure that each food handler has the skills and knowledge to handle food safely. However, these food handlers must still comply with the health and hygiene requirements of the Food Safety Standards.

5 Labelling

Under the new food legislation, food sold at events that raise money solely for charitable or community causes and not for personal financial gain no longer need to be labelled. The only exception to this is if you are selling royal jelly or a food that contains royal jelly¹ as an ingredient. If you are, a warning statement² must be included on the label.

Although you do not need to label your food, there are circumstances where the law requires you to provide information about the foods you sell, if you are asked. For example, if someone asks you whether a food contains a particular ingredient that may cause an allergic reaction, you must provide this person with this information.

Ingredients that may cause allergic reactions are listed in section 5.2. If the food being sold contains any of these ingredients, somebody at the sales point should know and be able to provide the information when asked, or a sign could be included where the food is displayed. An ingredient list on the label makes this task easier.

Although charities and community organisations are not required by law to label food, they may wish to provide labels on their products to enable the buyer to identify the food, its ingredients and where it was made. If you do decide to label the food, you should follow section 5.1.

There are also other circumstances when information may need to be provided. Before the event takes place, the organiser of the charitable or community event should ask the [state health authority](#) whether any of these circumstances apply.³

5.1 Labelling Food

Food labels identify the food and provide information to help people decide whether they are able or want to eat the food. It also helps the event organiser know what food is being sold, what it contains and where it has come from.

If you wish to label your food, it is recommended that the label includes:

¹ Royal jelly is the milky white, viscous secretion from the salivary glands of honey bees

² The warning statement required is 'This product contains royal jelly which has been reported to cause severe allergic reactions and in rare cases, fatalities, especially in asthma and allergy sufferers'

³ All exceptions to the labelling exemptions are listed in clause 2(2) of *Standard 1.2.1 Application of Labelling and Other Information Requirements*, in the *Food Standards Code*. The Code can be read on the Australia New Zealand Food Authority's website www.foodstandards.gov.au. If any of these exceptions apply, the information must be provided to the purchaser upon request or displayed next to the food.

- a description of the food, for example 'strawberry jam' or 'chocolate cake';
- the name and address of the person or company who made the food, so that the maker can be traced (for example, if a packet cake mix);
- a list of ingredients;
- a 'best before' date to indicate how long the food will keep; and
- any special storage conditions, for example 'keep refrigerated'. A simple handwritten label is sufficient.

<p>ANZAC BISCUITS</p> <p>Ingredients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Plain Flour (contains Gluten)▪ Rolled Oats▪ Caster Sugar▪ Desiccated Coconut▪ Golden Syrup▪ Bicarb Soda▪ Butter (contains Dairy)
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If you prepare the product yourself you will know what is in it. If you have used a packet mix, write the ingredients from the packet on your label. Remember to include any other ingredients you may have added, such as eggs.

5.2 Foods or Ingredients That Are Known to Cause Allergic Reactions

If food for sale contains any ingredient on the following list, the information must be given to a buyer on request, or displayed next to the food or on the packaging:

- gluten (a substance found in wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt⁴, and therefore present in foods made from these grains, such as flour)
- fish and fish products
- crustacea (shellfish) and products
- egg and egg products
- milk and milk products
- soya beans and products
- peanuts and products
- sesame seeds and products
- other nuts and products
- sulphites (a preservative)⁵
- royal jelly (a secretion from the salivary glands of honey bees)
- bee pollen (pollen collected from the legs of bees)
- propolis (a substance collected by bees).

⁴ A variety of wheat.

⁵ This applies to added sulphites in concentrations of 10mg/kg or more.

6 Hazardous and Non-Hazardous Foods

6.1 Hazardous Food

The Food Standards code defines a Potentially Hazardous Foods (PHF) as food that has to be kept at certain temperatures to minimise multiplication of any food-poisoning bacteria that may be present in the food

Foods normally considered to be potentially hazardous are:

- raw meats, cooked meats and food containing meat, such as casseroles, curries, lasagne and meat pies
- dairy products and foods containing dairy products, such as milk, cream, custard and dairy-based desserts
- seafood (excluding live seafood) and food containing seafood, such as seafood salad
- processed fruits and vegetables, such as prepared salads and ready-to-eat fruit packs
- cooked rice and pasta
- processed foods containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein-rich food, such as quiche and soya bean products, and
- foods that contain any of the above foods, such as sandwiches, rice salads and pasta salads.

6.2 Non-Hazardous Food

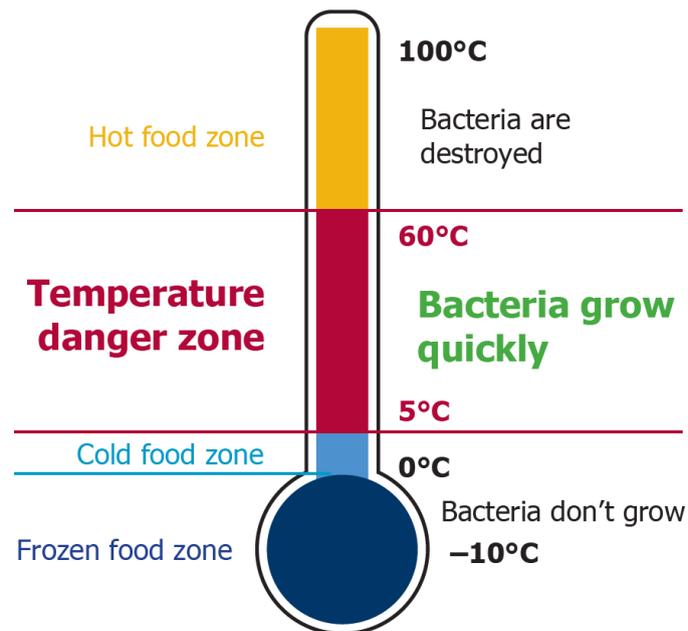
Foods normally considered non-hazardous are those that do not require refrigeration upon sale or those which are shelf stable. However many non-hazardous products require refrigeration to maintain quality once opened such as canned foods or cut fruit.

Below is a list of foods considered as non-hazardous.

- dry goods
- canned foods
- nuts
- long life milk
- raw fruit and vegetables (that have not been cut up)
- cakes, biscuits, breads and other baked goods (without cream or custard)
- fruit juices
- chocolates and confectionary
- sauces, marinades and salad dressings
- spreads (vegemite, peanut butter, jams)

7 Temperature Control

Safe temperatures for potentially hazardous foods are 5°C or colder, or 60°C or hotter. Potentially hazardous food needs to be kept at these temperatures to prevent food-poisoning bacteria, which may be present in the food, from multiplying to dangerous levels. These bacteria can grow at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C, which is known as the temperature danger zone. The fastest rate of growth is at around 37°C, the temperature of the human body.



7.1 2 hour / 4 Hour rule

Although potentially hazardous food should be kept at 5°C or colder or 60°C or hotter wherever possible, this food can be kept safely between 5°C and 60°C provided it is between these temperatures for less than four hours as it takes more than four hours for food-poisoning bacteria to grow to dangerous levels.

The 2 hour/4 hour rule applies to ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food. It provides guidance on how long this type of food can be held safely at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C and what should happen to it after certain times. The times refer to the life of the food, including preparation and cooling, not just to display times, so remember to add up the total time that the food has been between 5°C and 60°C.

If in doubt about the total time the food has been between 5°C and 60°C always throw out.



7.2 Keeping Food Cold

When you are preparing food, make sure that you have enough refrigerator space or insulated boxes with ice bricks to store the food. It is important to remember that refrigerators do not work properly when they are overloaded or when food is packed tightly, because the cold air cannot circulate.

If you are running out of room in your refrigerator, remove foods that are not potentially hazardous, such as drinks. The temperature of these foods is not critical and they can be kept cool in insulated containers with ice or ice blocks. Refrigerators in staff kitchens should be regularly cleaned (see section 8).

7.3 Cooling Foods

If potentially hazardous foods have to be cooled, their temperature should be reduced as quickly as possible. The temperature should fall from 60°C to 21°C in less than two hours and be reduced to 5°C or colder in the next four hours. Safe cooling can be achieved by:

- removing the food from the stove top, oven or other heat source after it has cooked
- allowing the food to initially cool outside the refrigerator – but make sure it is placed in the refrigerator as soon as any part of it drops to a temperature of 60°C, and
- placing the food in shallow containers.

You will need to use your thermometer to check that the cooked food is being cooled within the 6-hour time limit.

If you decide you want to pre-cook food and then cool it, you will need to ensure that the food is cooled rapidly to 5°C. If a large container of cooked food, for example a beef curry, is placed in a refrigerator for cooling, it can take as long as 24 hours to cool to 5°C. This is very dangerous as the centre of the food will remain warm and allow food-poisoning bacteria to grow to dangerous levels.

7.4 Keeping Food Hot

If you are keeping food hot on cooktops, in ovens or in Bain Marie units, the equipment needs to be set high enough to ensure that the food remains above 60°C.

7.5 Reheating Food

Cold food (which is to be served hot) will need to be quickly and thoroughly heated at the event until it is steaming hot and then kept hot until it is served. Food to be held hot must be rapidly reheated to a minimum of 60°C at the centre. For added safety, foods should be reheated to 75°C (or 70°C for 2 minutes).

7.6 Checking Temperatures of Food

A thermometer is only required if are preparing, handling and selling PHF that will not be consumed immediately after cooking or where the food is a PHF that requires temperature control. For further guidance on thermometers and checking temperatures of food refer to the [NSW food authority website](#).

8 Foods in Office or Lunchroom Refrigerators

Cleaning of the lunchroom/ office refrigerator is a dreaded task and is often ignored. It is very important for the health of workers to have a clean fridge. Potent smells from rotten food can also make workers sick, as well as release mould and mildew spores into the air. If you make cleaning the lunchroom/office refrigerator a shared responsibility it should not be as daunting as facing it alone. Share the responsibility - make it a food safety issue!

Here are some tips to maintaining a clean refrigerator in the workplace:

- make a schedule to throw away leftovers. Most offices pick a day and anything left on that day will be thrown out. Friday is a good choice so food won't be left over the weekend
- wipe up spills immediately before they turn into a major cleaning job. Clean surfaces thoroughly with hot, soapy water; then rinse. Add a little vinegar to zap grease. Toothpaste works great for sticky food that has already hardened.
- to keep the refrigerator smelling fresh and help eliminate odours, place an opened box of baking soda on a shelf. This will keep things fresh and prevent new odours from occurring. Avoid using harsh chemicals; you don't want anything contaminating your food. If odours have already reached an offensive level, try placing a plate of charcoal (used for grilling) in the refrigerator. This will absorb odours that are already a problem. Just make sure you place the plate on a shelf away from food; it will only need to be placed there for a few days
- ALWAYS check expiration dates - anything that is expired needs to be thrown out immediately.

9 Preparing and Cooking Food

People involved in the preparation and cooking of food also need to read the section 11. It is particularly important that you do NOT prepare or cook food if you are ill with diarrhoea and/or vomiting.

9.1 Buying Food

When you buy potentially hazardous food, place it in insulated bags or boxes for transporting to the preparation place if it is not close to your shops. Place your potentially hazardous food in a refrigerator or freezer as soon as possible. Refer to section **Error! Reference source not found.** for a list of foods that are potentially hazardous.

9.2 Thawing Frozen Food

Frozen food (e.g. raw meat) should be thoroughly thawed before cooking. If food is still partially frozen, it will take longer to cook and may not cook properly. The outside of the food may look cooked but the centre may not be, allowing harmful bacteria to survive. There are 3 main ways to thaw frozen foods:

- thawing in the refrigerator. This is the safest method of thawing frozen foods. Allow enough time to thaw food in the fridge at a safe temperature. Small portions of meat should thaw overnight but whole chickens may take longer (eg 1-2 days)
- thawing in water. To thaw food in water put frozen food in a container with a lid and place it under cold running water at 21°C or below for no more than 4 hours. Cold water will help to speed up thawing without allowing the outside of the food to get too warm. If the food remains frozen after 4 hours, continue to thaw in the fridge. If the water temperature exceeds 21°C, throw the food away
- thawing in the microwave. If you thaw foods in the microwave they must be cooked 30 mins after thawing otherwise they must be thrown away.

Thawed food must be used as quickly as possible after thawing. Thawed foods spoil more quickly because the extra water on the outside surface of the food provides an ideal environment for bacteria to grow. If a thawed food has been out of the refrigerator or freezer for more than 4hrs throw it away.

Thawed food must not be returned to the freezer as harmful bacteria may have grown during the thawing process and these bacteria will not be killed by the freezing process.

9.3 Preparing Food

Before preparing food, make sure that hands, clothes, equipment and kitchen surfaces are clean. They will also need to be kept clean throughout food preparation.

If your event is to be held outdoors with limited facilities, prepare the food in a kitchen and then transport it to the event. This does not mean that you need to cook food before you take it to the event but it is recommended to slice the raw meat ready for cooking. Food that is freshly cooked at the event and served straight away, as with barbecues, has less chance of becoming unsafe than food that is pre-cooked and then taken to the event. Therefore, wherever possible, try to cook food at the event rather than pre-cooking it.

9.3.1 Preventing Food from Becoming Contaminated During Preparation

The most important step to remember before preparing food is to wash and dry your hands thoroughly.

Always keep fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables away from uncooked meats or seafood. Use separate chopping boards and utensils when preparing fresh and uncooked foods.

Never use the same utensils for raw meats and foods that are ready to eat, such as cooked meats, unless they have been thoroughly cleaned, sanitised and dried.

Try to use tongs and other utensils when preparing food that will not be cooked before it is eaten, such as salads and sandwiches. You may prefer to wear gloves, but remember that they should be used for one task only (for example, breaking up a cooked chicken for sandwiches). When you start the next task, wear new gloves.

Cooked food and other food that is ready to eat, such as salads, should always be placed on clean and dry serving dishes.

9.3.2 Cleaning and Sanitising Utensils

There are three steps needed to effectively clean and sanitise utensils:

- washing
- sanitising, and
- drying

Utensils such as cutting boards, bowls and knives need to be thoroughly washed in warm soapy water. After washing, the utensils should look clean and there should be no food or anything else visible on them. Effective cleaning will remove most of the dangerous bacteria present. Sanitising will then kill any that might remain.

A dishwasher is very effective at sanitising if it has a hot wash and drying cycle. If you do not have a dishwasher, you will need to sanitise in a sink using a chemical sanitiser or very hot water. If using a chemical sanitiser such as a sodium hypochlorite or quaternary ammonium-based solution, ensure that it can be safely used for sanitising eating, drinking and cooking utensils. Follow the instructions on the container carefully, as different sanitisers work in different ways. If you are using very hot water, take extra care to avoid being scalded.

All utensils must then be thoroughly dried before they are re-used. Air-drying is best but tea towels can be used if they are clean. If you are washing up at an event being held outdoors, make sure you have access to plenty of hot water. If hot water is not available, disposable eating and drinking utensils should be used and enough cooking utensils provided to last the duration of the event so that washing up is not necessary.

9.4 Cooking

Always cook food thoroughly. Do not partially cook food and then warm it up later. Cook chicken, sausages and hamburgers until juices run clear - beef steaks can be cooked to preference. Cooking will reduce dangerous bacteria to safe levels if it is done properly. Remember that some food-poisoning bacteria can protect themselves from cooking and while they will not be present in enough numbers to make someone sick just after the food is cooked, they can start growing again if the cooked food is left at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C for too long. This is why cooling cooked food quickly is so important.

Wherever possible, try to cook food as close to the time that you will be serving or selling it. For example, if you can, take the food to the event and cook it there. This reduces the chance of the food becoming contaminated after it has been cooked. It also means that there won't be enough time for food-poisoning bacteria to grow to dangerous levels on the cooked food before it is eaten.

If it isn't practical to cook food at the event, you will need to pre-cook the food and transport it hot, or alternatively cook it, cool it and then transport it cold. Refer to section 7.

9.5 Making Sandwiches

Sandwiches are a popular product for community and fundraising events. Making them usually involves a lot of handling, which makes personal hygiene very important.

Sandwiches are often filled with potentially hazardous food and should be handled and stored like any other high-risk food. They should be made fresh as close to the start of the event as possible. If this is not practical, they should be kept in a refrigerator. Make sure that you have enough refrigerator space to store them safely - they may take up a lot of room.

Because sandwiches require a lot of handling, the contact time with the person making them is increased. Because of this, it is very important that people who are ill do not make the sandwiches.

Sandwiches should be kept under temperature control when they are transported and displayed for sale. Alternatively, you could use time, rather than temperature, to keep the sandwiches safe. For more information refer section 7.

9.6 Barbeques

Take the following precautions at sausage sizzles and barbecues to ensure that food is safe:

- finish preparing raw meat before leaving for the site such as slicing, marinating or skewering
- pack raw meat into insulated boxes with ice bricks for transportation
- handle food with tongs or other equipment. Use separate equipment to handle raw and cooked meats. Hands should not be used unless absolutely necessary, and then hand washing facilities must be available. Hands must be washed after handling raw meats (see section 12)
- keep cooked meat and salads separate from raw meat at all times to prevent contamination.
- cover food to protect it from contamination
- use clean and dry utensils for serving the food – never place cooked meat back on the trays that held the raw meat
- always use separate utensils for cooked meat, uncooked meat and salads
- cook chicken, sausages and hamburgers until juices run clear - steaks can be cooked to preference

- throw left-over food away unless refrigeration equipment is available to rapidly cool the food
- wherever possible, single-use (disposable) utensils such as knives, forks, plates and cups should be used and thrown away after use.

10 Transporting Food

When you are transporting food, you need to consider two main food safety issues:

1. keeping the food protected from contamination and,
2. if the food is potentially hazardous, keeping it cold (5°C or colder) or hot (60°C or hotter).

10.1 Protecting Food from Contamination

It is important to protect food from contamination by keeping it covered at all times. You can achieve this by using containers with lids or by applying plastic film over containers. Materials used to cover food should be suitable for food contact, to ensure that they do not contain any chemicals that could leach into the food. Aluminium foil, plastic film and clean paper may be used, and food should be completely covered. Packaged products should not need additional covering.

Previously used materials and newspaper may contaminate food and should not be used.

10.2 Temperature Control when Transporting Food

When potentially hazardous foods are transported they should be kept under 5°C or above 60°C during the journey.

If the journey is short, insulated containers may keep the food cold. If the journey is longer, you may need to use ice bricks to keep food cold and heat packs to keep food hot.

Place only pre-heated or pre-cooled food in an insulated container, which should have a lid to help maintain safe temperatures. Insulated containers must be:

- in good condition and kept clean at all times
- used only for food
- kept away from other items such as chemicals, pet food, fuel and paint
- be filled as quickly as possible and closed as soon as they have been filled, and
- kept closed until immediately before the food is needed or is placed in other temperature- controlled equipment.

10.3 Transport Considerations

Below is a list of transport considerations:

- containers of cool food should be placed in the coolest part of the vehicle
- if the inside of the vehicle is air-conditioned, cold food may be better transported within the cabin rather than in the boot

- vehicles should be clean. If the vehicle is normally used for carrying pets or dirty equipment, the food carrying area should be thoroughly cleaned or lined to prevent any contamination. This may not be necessary if food is transported in an insulated container with a tightly fitting lid
- the journey should be properly planned and should be kept as short as possible
- when collecting ingredients, cold foods should be collected last and immediately placed in insulated containers or cool bags for transporting to the preparation facility
- when taking prepared foods to a venue, pack the food into insulated boxes as your last job
- when you arrive at the venue, make it your first job to unload any hot or cold food and place it in temperature-controlled equipment.

11 Catering for Field Trips

Preparing food for field trips can be very challenging because facilities found in the home or commercial food premises are not generally available. You need to properly plan to ensure food safety. The field trip should be memorable only for the outdoor research experience and not negative health experiences.

There are five main considerations for keeping food safe on field trips as outlined below:

11.1 Temperature Control

The use of potentially hazardous foods when on field trips should be kept to a minimum, unless the food can be kept below 5°C. Potentially hazardous foods support the growth of bacteria that can cause illness if large numbers of bacteria are present. For a list of potentially hazardous foods see section 7.

If your field trip is catering for a large number of people, it may be practical to have gas-powered refrigeration equipment or to use similar facilities close to your campsite.

If you only have limited equipment to keep food cold, buy potentially hazardous foods fresh daily and throw away any leftover food.

You could also consider purchasing foods that are shelf-stable. These are foods that do not need temperature-controlled storage until they are opened. Examples include long-life milk (heat-treated in the carton); canned meats, fish and dairy products; and dried and dehydrated foods.

11.2 Water Supply

A safe water supply is probably the most important requirement when camping because water is necessary for preparing and cooking food, cleaning utensils and helping to maintain personal hygiene. Your camp will need access to water of drinking quality.

If water at the site is not suitable for drinking, it will need to be treated. The easiest way to treat this water is to boil it, but it has to be protected from contamination during cooling and storage.

It is not always practical to boil the amount of water needed for food preparation and personal hygiene and you may wish to use chemical sterilisation. Always follow the manufacturers' instructions when using these chemicals.

Water filters may also be an option but they can be slow and must be maintained in good working condition. You will also need to check with the supplier of the filter to find out whether it will be effective for your purposes. Filters should not be damaged and they may need to be cleaned or replaced regularly.

Sources of drinking water, such as streams, wells and bores, should be protected. Access to the water collection point should be restricted and the area protected from animals and foreign matter. Use only clean containers that are specifically kept for drinking water. Store them carefully at all times, whether they are full or empty, with their lids fastened.

11.3 Hand Washing

For effective hand washing, clean warm running water is needed so that soap can function correctly and hands can be rinsed before they are dried. During field trips, clean running water is not always readily available. A suitable alternative such as sterile wipes or cleaning gels must be used to ensure that hands do not contaminate food.

If you have access to water of drinking quality, you should set up a temporary hand washing facility that provides running water. You can do this by using a large water container with a tap at its base. Another container, such as a bucket, should collect the waste water, to keep the site dry and clean.

A supply of soap and paper towels must be provided at the hand washing facilities so that hand washing can be undertaken properly. Supply a bin for used towels. This helps to keep the site tidy and prevents contamination from used towels.

11.4 Protecting Food from Contamination

It is very important to protect food from contamination. Bacteria cannot move from place to place by themselves they need help from poor food-handling practices. Poor food handling often allows bacteria to be transferred from a non-food source to food, and from one food to another. The risk of contamination is often greater when on field trips because only basic equipment and amenities may be available.

To protect food from contamination:

- wash your hands before preparing or handling food
- keep food covered
- use separate utensils such as knives and chopping boards for different foods
- keep raw meat and raw fruits and vegetables well away from foods which are ready to eat, such as cooked meat and salads
- always thoroughly wash and dry your hands after handling raw meat, and
- thoroughly wash and dry eating and drinking utensils and store in a clean place.

11.5 Disposal of Rubbish and Waste Water

The disposal of rubbish and waste water needs careful planning because they attract pests and contaminate food if they are not properly stored and disposed of. Rubbish should be bagged and tied, and kept well away from food preparation areas.

There may be a designated disposal area for waste water at your camping site. Always use this - do not dispose of waste water in or near water sources.

12 Health and Hygiene for Food Handlers

The Food Safety Standards contain requirements that relate to health and hygiene and have been included to ensure that food handlers take steps to avoid contaminating food. A food handler is anyone who handles food or items that may come into contact with food, such as eating and drinking utensils. All food handlers are legally obliged to comply with the health and hygiene requirements set out in the Food Safety Standards.

Food businesses must inform all food handlers of their health and hygiene obligations under the Food Safety Standards. You could ask all food handlers to sign a form, to say that they have read and understood these guidelines. This is a good way of keeping checks on who has been advised. It also provides evidence that this requirement has been fulfilled. You may want to delegate this responsibility to one person in your organisation so that a consistent approach is taken and no volunteers are missed.

12.1 Health Requirements

If you are ill or have an infection you can easily transfer harmful bacteria or viruses to food. Do not handle food if:

- you are ill with vomiting, diarrhoea, fever or sore throat with fever, or
- your doctor has diagnosed that you have or carry a food borne illness.

If you have volunteered for an event and then become ill with any of the above symptoms, let the event organiser know that you can no longer work. This is very important, no matter how short-staffed the event may be. Food handlers who are ill can easily make food unsafe. Not only is it against the law, it is not worth the risk. If you start to feel unwell while you are at an event, stop handling food and let the event organiser know immediately.

12.2 Hygiene Requirements

12.2.1 General Hygiene

Each food handler must take all precautions to ensure that food or surfaces that come in contact with food are not contaminated by his or her body or anything he or she is wearing. This includes hair, saliva, mucus, sweat, blood, fingernails, clothes, jewellery or bandages.

You are required to:

- avoid handling ready-to-eat food such as salads and cooked food use tongs or other implements instead
- wear clean outer clothing
- make sure bandages and dressings on exposed parts of your body (such as the hands, arms or face) are covered with waterproof coverings and are easily identified if they fall off such as blue bandaids
- not eat over uncovered food or equipment and utensils
- not sneeze, blow or cough over uncovered food or equipment and utensils, and
- not spit, or smoke where food is handled.

12.2.2 Hand Washing

The most important measure to protect food from contamination is proper hand washing because clean and dry hands limit the transfer of harmful organisms to food. The Food Safety Standards require food handlers to wash their hands whenever hands are likely to be a source of contamination of food, including:

- before handling food
- between handling raw food and food that is ready to eat, such as cooked food and salads
- after using the toilet
- after smoking, coughing, sneezing, blowing the nose, eating or drinking
- after touching hair, scalp, mouth, nose or ear canal, and
- after handling rubbish and other waste.

There are five steps that should be followed when washing hands. These are:

- wet hands under warm running water
- soap hands, lathering well
- rub thoroughly, including the wrists and between the fingers
- rinse in clean water, and
- dry thoroughly on paper towel, leaving no moisture on the hands.

13 References and Related Documents

- [Australian Food Safety Code and Standards](#)
- [NSW Food Authority](#)
- [NSW Food Safety Act 2003](#)
- [NSW Food Safety Regulations 2015](#)
- [Fieldwork Guidelines](#)

14 Program Evaluation

In order to ensure that these guidelines continue to be effective and applicable to the University, these guidelines will be reviewed regularly by the WHS Unit in consultation with the WHS Committee.

Conditions which might warrant a review of the guidelines on a more frequent basis would include:

- reported hazards or injuries
- non-conforming systems
- WHS Committee concern.

Following the completion of any review, the program will be revised/updated in order to correct any deficiencies. These changes will be communicated via the WHS Committee.

15 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	September 2013	Manager WHS	New guidelines created.
2	November 2016	Manager WHS	Scheduled review. Re-ordered sections and added extra information about 2/4hr rule and considerations for thawing foods
3	March 2025		Updated broken links; rebrand (font).