

FACT SHEET

FOOD CONTAMINATION

PROTECTING FOOD FROM CONTAMINATION

Food can become contaminated in a number of different ways (e.g. objects, people, pests, chemicals etc.), and this can cause serious illness. Food businesses are required by law to take precautions to avoid causing harm to people who eat their food.

It is a legal requirement that food businesses take all practicable measures to protect food from contamination when receiving, storing, processing and displaying food.



COMMON FOOD CONTAMINANTS

- Juices from raw foods like meat and seafood.
- Dirty equipment, utensils and food contact surfaces.
- Bacteria and viruses from unwashed hands and poor personal hygiene.
- Pests and their droppings.
- Chemicals.
- Jewellery, hair, band-aids, false nails and personal items.
- Glass, metal, plastic and other fragments from damaged equipment, fittings and fixtures.

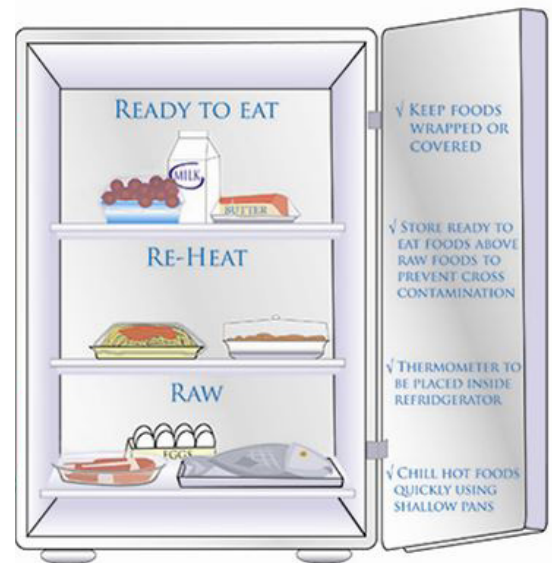
PROTECTION DURING STORAGE

In addition to ensuring the temperature stays under 5°C, it's also important to give some thought to where food is stored.

Fridges and cool rooms

Correct placement of food in fridges and cool rooms is one of the easiest ways to prevent raw food items from contaminating cooked and ready to eat foods.

- Raw foods must be stored on the bottom shelves so the juices do not drip onto food below.
- Foods that are to be reheated or further processed can be stored on the middle shelves.
- Ready to eat food like salad ingredients and fresh fruit should be stored on the top shelf.
- All food in fridges, cool rooms and freezers must be covered to prevent contamination from physical objects such as dust, clothing, and other foreign objects.



Food grade containers

Food storage containers must be in good condition and be safe for storing food. Containers with broken lids or missing and broken pieces must be thrown away to prevent any plastic fragments from contaminating the food.



It's important that all plastic used for food storage is made from food grade materials. Check for the following symbols printed on the bottom of containers:



Cup & Fork
indicates
this plastic
is safe for
contact
with food.



**Radiation
Waves**
indicates
this plastic
is safe for
microwave.



Snowflake
indicates
this plastic
is safe for
use in the
freezer.



**Dishes in
Water**
indicates
this plastic
is safe for
dishwasher
top rack.

Re-used ice cream and takeaway containers are not suitable for prolonged food storage and can have increased allergen risk.

Open bags

When open bags of products are left in store rooms they are easily contaminated by pests including cockroaches, rodents and flies.

Even with the top rolled down or tied with an elastic, these pests can make their way into the bag and contaminate the product.

Always store open bags of products in food grade containers with tight fitting lids.



PROTECTION DURING PROCESSING

Thawing food

It's recommended to thaw potentially hazardous food in the fridge to minimise the growth of food-poisoning bacteria. This can take several days for larger items, so adequate planning is needed.

For more rapid thawing, food may be placed under cold, running water. Adequate sink space is required and there must be sufficient water flow. If you're using this method, you must monitor the food closely and remove it as soon as it's thawed.

THAWING FOOD AT ROOM TEMPERATURE IS NOT RECOMMENDED.

Reheating food

Potentially hazardous foods that have been previously cooked and cooled must be rapidly reheated on the stove, or in the oven or microwave.

If the food needs to be held in a Bain Marie, the Bain Marie must be turned on in advance to ensure the temperature of the food doesn't drop below 60°C.

Food preparation

- Clean and sanitise utensils, chopping boards and other food contact surfaces before use and between preparing raw food and ready to eat food.
- Process ready to eat foods and raw foods in separate areas or at different times to avoid cross contamination.
- Keep food preparation areas clean, well maintained and free from pests.
- Keep chemicals and personal items separate from food preparation areas.

PROTECTION DURING DISPLAY

- Separate ready to eat and raw foods using either a physical barrier or separate displays.
- Keep food at the correct temperature. Do not overstock containers in hot and cold display cabinets.
- Always use a clean and sanitised digital probe thermometer to check the temperature of food. Do not rely on the temperature display on the unit.
- Use sneeze guards or other physical barriers to avoid contamination by customers.

For more information go to penrithcity.nsw.gov.au or phone 4732 8055