

Food Handling and Preparation

U3As are covered by the liability insurance policy provided by the Third Age Trust, should there be any problem resulting from the serving of food to members or prospective members, during a U3A-organised activity.

Nevertheless it seems sensible to put together some guidelines based on advice from the Food Standards Agency, which you can make available to the appropriate people if you do serve hot or cold food at some of your functions, to avoid potential problems.

FOOD HANDLING

Cross Contamination

One of the most common causes of food poisoning is when harmful bacteria is spread to food from other food, hands or equipment. Raw meat, eggs and poultry are the most common sources but others are people, equipment and cloths.

Raw Meat/ Poultry

- If defrosting in the fridge make sure the container is covered and below 'ready to eat' foods. Ideally defrost in a separate area of the kitchen away from all other foods.
- Keep away from all other foods and throw packaging away.
- Use different area of the kitchen and prepare at a different time. Use a different chopping board and knives and replace scoured/scratched chopping boards.
- If grilling or barbecuing make sure raw meat doesn't touch or drip onto food already cooking.
- Cover all food properly with foil or film and use containers with lids/bags designed to store food. Don't store anything in tins and don't let food covers fall into food. Don't reuse foil/film/freezer bags and wash storage boxes thoroughly between use.
- Store raw and 'ready to eat' food separately and in different parts of the fridge with raw below 'ready to eat'.
- Avoid chipped/cracked dishes.

People

You must avoid the following when handling food:

- Smoking.
- Drinking.
- Eating.
- Touching your face.
- Coughing and sneezing.
- Wearing a watch or jewellery.

You must do the following:-

- Wash your hands before you start and then after touching raw meat, poultry, fish, eggs or unwashed vegetables.
- Wear a clean apron especially if you are handling unwrapped food.
- Keep your hair tied back or covered.
- Ensure any cuts are covered with a waterproof dressing.

Cloths

Ensure that you replace cloths after each task and if they are reusable wash on hot cycle to kill bacteria.

Chilling food

Food with a 'use by' date needs to be kept chilled/refrigerated. Food cooked in advance should be cooled down and then refrigerated. Salads/desserts should be chilled.

Defrosting

Thoroughly defrost before cooking, preferably in the fridge.

Frozen food

Try to put into freezer immediately or in the case of prepared food as soon as it is chilled down. Use appropriate containers/bags and divide into smaller portions where possible.

Allergies

If homemade, keep a list of ingredients; if ready-made, copy the list of ingredients. The main problems are:

- Peanuts (groundnuts) – sauces, cakes, desserts. Be careful of peanut flour/groundnut oil.
- Nuts – sauces, desserts, crackers, bread, ice cream, nut oils, marzipan, ground almonds.
- Milk – yoghurt, cream, cheese, butter, milk powder. Dishes glazed with milk.
- Eggs – cakes, mousses, sauces, pasta, quiche. Binding meat products e.g. burgers. Dishes brushed with egg.
- Fish/shellfish/anchovy – salad dressings, sauces, relishes, pastes, pizzas.
- Soya/soya flour/protein/tofu (bean curd) – ice cream, sauces, desserts, meat, vegetable products e.g. veggie burger.
- Gluten - cereals – wheat, rye, barley and foods made from these; wheat flour in bread, pasta, cakes, pastry, meat products; soups & sauces – thickened with flour; food dusted with flour; batter and breadcrumbs.
- Sesame seeds – bread, breadsticks, sesame oil.
- Celery/celeriac – salads, soups, celery salt, celery seeds.
- Mustard - salad dressings, marinades, soups, sauces, curries, meat products.
- Sulphur dioxide – used as a preservative in sauces, soft drinks, dried fruit; used in wine and beer. Particularly bad for asthma sufferers.

In the case of an allergic reaction:-

- Don't move them.
- Ring 999 and ask for a paramedic.
- Explain they could have anaphylaxis.

COOKING SAFELY

- Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Preheat oven/grill.
- Turn meat/poultry during cooking.
- Liquid dishes should be simmering and bubble rapidly when stirred.
- Poultry and pork should have no pink or red juice/meat.
- Check food is thoroughly cooked e.g. with meat check thickest part of leg and with fish check by the bone etc.
- Make sure eggs and any food including eggs are piping hot.
- Use pasteurized eggs for any food not cooked or lightly cooked e.g. mayonnaise.
- Be cautious with rice – keep it hot until serving or chill it down and keep in the fridge.

REHEATING

Make sure it is piping hot, preheat oven/grill and serve immediately.

For more information, see the Food Standards Agency Website, www.food.gov.uk.