

Providing food at community and charity events

Guidance on providing food in a village hall or other community setting for volunteers and charity groups. It includes advice on registration, certificates and allergen information.

Food supplied, sold or provided at charity or community events, such as street parties, school fetes or fundraisers, must comply with food law and be safe to eat.

Registration

You may need to [register with your local authority as a food business](#) if you provide food on a regular and organised basis.

Our [guidance on the application of EU food hygiene law](#) gives practical examples of community and charity events selling or supplying food. It will help you decide whether your events will require registration.

If you handle, prepare, store and serve food occasionally and on a small scale, you do not need to register.

Allergen information

From 1st October 2021, [new allergen labelling requirements](#) were applied to a category of food called prepacked for direct sale (PPDS).

PPDS food is food that is packed on the same site as which it is sold (this includes mobile premises used by the same business) before the customer orders it.

The allergen labelling law, sometimes called Natasha's Law, applies to [registered food businesses](#). If your activity does not need to be registered as a food business, you don't have to provide information for consumers about allergens present in the food as ingredients.

However, we recommend that the more information you can provide about allergens orally or in writing for customers, the better it is, so that they can make safe choices, particularly for those with allergies.

If you are a registered food business, you will need to follow the [allergen rules](#).

Food hygiene certificates

You do not need a food hygiene certificate to make and sell food for charity events. However, you need to make sure that you handle food safely.

Keeping food safe

Following the 4Cs of food hygiene will help you prepare, make and store food safely. The 4Cs of food hygiene are:

- [cleaning](#)
- [chilling](#)
- [cooking](#)
- [avoiding cross-contamination](#)

Here are some general practical tips for when you're making food for large numbers of people:

- prepare food in advance and freeze it, if you can, but ensure the food is properly defrosted before you use it
- wash your hands regularly with soap and water, using hand sanitisers if hand washing facilities are not available
- always wash fresh fruit and vegetables
- keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart
- do not use food past its use-by date
- always read any cooking instructions and make sure food is properly cooked before you serve it
- ensure that food preparation areas are suitably cleaned and sanitised after use and wash any equipment you are using in hot soapy water
- keep food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible

Chilled food

Food that needs to be chilled, such as sandwich fillings served as part of a buffet, should be left out of the fridge for no more than four hours. After this time, any remaining food should be thrown away or put back in the fridge. If you put the food back in the fridge, don't let it stand around at room temperature when you serve it again.

Use-by dates

Use-by dates show how long the food remains safe to eat or drink. Check and follow the use-by dates of the food you serve. Food cannot be supplied in any circumstances if its use-by date has passed. This also applies if you are supplying people with packaged food from a food bank.

[WRAP date labelling guidance](#) provides advice on how to safely redistribute surplus food and avoid food waste.

Foods that need extra care

Some foods are more likely to cause food poisoning than others. These include:

- raw milk
- raw shellfish
- soft cheeses
- pâté
- foods containing raw egg
- cooked sliced meats

If you serve any of these foods, consult the [Foods which need extra care](#) section in the [Safer food better business pack](#).

Cakes

You can serve home-made cakes at community events. They should be safe to eat if:

- a recipe from a reputable source is used
- the people who make them follow good food hygiene advice
- the cakes are stored and transported safely

Making and transporting cakes

If you make a cake at home:

- use recipes from reputable sources
- always wash your hands before preparing food
- make sure that surfaces, bowls, utensils, and any other equipment are clean
- don't use raw eggs in anything that won't be thoroughly cooked, such as icing or mousse
- keep cheesecakes and any cakes or desserts containing fresh cream in the fridge
- store cakes in a clean, sealable container, away from raw foods

On the day, when you bring in cakes from home or run the stall, you should:

- transport cakes in a clean, sealable container
- make sure that cheesecake and any cakes or desserts containing fresh cream are left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible, ideally not longer than 4 hours
- when handling cakes use tongs or a cake slice

Storing cakes

You can keep cakes and baked goods with high sugar content in:

- airtight containers - this will prevent mould growth through absorption of moisture from the atmosphere
- the fridge - cakes will last for longer, but their quality may be affected

Any cakes with high moisture additions, such as cream added after baking, should not be left at room temperature. They must be stored chilled (in the fridge) and eaten within the use-by date of the added product.

There are some types of icing, such as ganache and buttercream, that can be kept outside the fridge. It's best to store them somewhere cool and dry. Check the guidelines for storage of the particular icing product you will be using.

Using jam jars

It is safe to re-use glass jam jars occasionally to supply home-made jam or chutney as long as the jars are properly washed. If jam jars are re-used, they should be free from chips and cracks, and should be sterilised prior to each use. Well-fitting lids will also minimise any hygiene risks to the food in the jars.

The regulations on food contact materials, which may limit the re-use of jam jars, apply to businesses. These regulations are highly unlikely to apply to the use of jam jars for occasional community and charity food provision. If you have any concerns about the re-use of jam jars, contact your [local authority food safety team](#).