

Food Safety Standards – Receiving food safely

Chapter 3 (Australia only) Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code

NOTE: The Food Safety Standards do not apply in New Zealand. The provisions of the food standards treaty between Australia and New Zealand do not include food hygiene standards.

Under Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*, food businesses are expected to take all practicable measures to ensure that they do not receive unsafe or unsuitable food. This means that they must make sure that the food they receive:

1. is protected from contamination;
2. can be identified while it is on the premises; and
3. is at the correct temperature when it arrives, if it is potentially hazardous.

How can I make sure food is not contaminated when it arrives at my premises?

While you will not always be able to tell if the food coming into your business is contaminated, you must take practical steps to reduce the possibility of contamination. For example, you might take the following steps.

Ask your food suppliers to make sure that food is protected from contamination during transportation and, wherever possible, ask them to send it in packages or containers.

Check that food is covered or packaged when it arrives and that the packaging or covering is not damaged, and check the 'best before' or 'use by' date – if the 'use by' date has passed the food must be rejected.

Make sure, wherever possible, that food is not delivered unless someone is at work to inspect the food when it arrives and to place it directly into the freezer or refrigerator or other appropriate storage area.

It might be difficult to check every item of food that comes into your premises but you could inspect incoming food on a random basis. You might also decide to check food from some suppliers more often than you check food from suppliers whose product generally arrives in good condition.

If food delivered to your premises is contaminated or you think it may be contaminated, you should return it to the supplier or, with the agreement of the supplier, destroy the food. For example, you may suspect contamination if packaging around the food is split or damaged. Food is also contaminated if it contains insects, rodent droppings, glass, metal or other foreign matter, or if it has spoilt.

How can I make sure that I know the source and name of food on my premises?

If an enforcement officer asks you to do so, you must be able to provide the officer with information on the suppliers of any food on your premises and what that food is. You need this information in case food on your premises is found to be unsafe or contaminated in some way and has to be returned to the supplier or destroyed.

Although most, if not all of the food you buy will be labelled with the name of the product and the name and address of the manufacturer, importer or packager of the food, you may also have unpackaged or unlabelled food on your premises and will need other ways of proving what this food is and where it came from. You might do so using your supplier invoices, or you might keep some other record of your suppliers and what you buy from them and the food you have on your premises.

You must not accept food unless you can identify it and trace it back to its supplier.

How do I ensure that potentially hazardous food arrives at the right temperature?

You must take practical steps to ensure that you do not accept a delivery of potentially hazardous food that is not at the correct temperature or that has been outside temperature control for longer than safe time limits. Potentially hazardous food delivered to your business must be:

- if it is chilled – at a temperature of 5°C or below;
- if it is hot – at a temperature of 60°C or above;
- if it is frozen – frozen and not partly thawed; or
- it can be at another temperature – provided the business delivering the food can demonstrate that safe time limits have not been exceeded.
- If potentially hazardous food delivered to your business does not meet these requirements you must reject that food.

In most cases, businesses will want potentially hazardous food delivered in chilled (5°C or below) or frozen form but there may be circumstances in which you are willing to accept potentially hazardous food at other temperatures. For example, you might be buying food that leaves the supplier at the correct temperature and where the transport time to your premises is short. Generally, however, where delivery times exceed two hours, the food should be carried in refrigerated vehicles that can hold the food at a temperature of 5°C or below or keep it frozen.

The fact sheet *Food Safety Standards - Temperature control requirements* provides more information on the temperature control of potentially hazardous food.

The following examples include some of the practical steps you might take to make sure that potentially hazardous food is safe when it is delivered to your business.

- You discuss acceptable delivery temperatures with a business that delivers food to your premises and formally agree that food will be delivered frozen or chilled or hot, or within safe time limits.
- If food should be frozen, you check it when it is delivered to your business to make sure that it is frozen and has not begun to thaw.
- If food should be chilled or hot, you check the temperature of the food when it is delivered to your business and make sure that it is at or below 5°C or at or above 60°C.
- If food should be delivered within safe time limits, you check the records of delivery departure and arrival times to ensure that the delivery took place within the agreed time limit.
- You need not check every food item or relevant delivery record but you should check some items to make sure that your suppliers are doing the right thing.

Need more information?

Copies of the standards, the guides to these and other fact sheets and supporting material can be found on the FSANZ website (<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/>). Food businesses may also seek advice directly from the Environmental Health Officers at their local council, or from their State or Territory health or health services department and Public Health Units. Information can also be accessed through the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing <http://www.health.gov.au/>.

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