

Food Matters in Bassendean



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Town of Bassendean food safety newsletter

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this edition of Food Matters in Bassendean. If you have any questions that you would like addressed in future newsletters, please call the Town's Health section on (08) 9377 8000 or email: mail@bassendean.wa.gov.au.

What are we finding on your inspections?

Food storage

Protecting food during storage is vital for safe and suitable food production. All food businesses are required to store food in such a way as to ensure it is protected from contamination, held under temperature control and in environmental conditions that will not adversely affect its safety and suitability.

The following should be used as a guide to assist you with the correct storage of food:

- Potentially hazardous foods are kept at or **below 5°C or above 60°C**.
- Raw meats must be stored below the ready-to-eat foods in fridges/cool-rooms.
- Food must be covered with tight fitting lids, foil or plastic film.
- Food items, even when they are still packaged, are **never stored on the floor** (floors invariably always contain potentially harmful bacteria).
- Follow a **first-in, first-out** system for stock rotation to ensure older stock is always used first.
- Food storage containers are regularly cleaned and sanitised.
- Food items are checked for signs of dampness, spoilage or expired use-by dates.
- Store items such as chemicals, cleaning equipment and personal belongings well away from food.
- Frozen food must be kept frozen during storage (**below -15°C**) as defrosting and re-freezing increases the chance of bacterial growth and can also affect the texture and flavour of food.

Pest control

Common pests such as mice and cockroaches can carry bacteria and viruses and can contaminate food and food contact surfaces. Pest sightings and food contamination due to pests, result in a large number of customer complaints.

Pests are generally attracted to food premises as they can provide shelter, water and a food source. Pests are most active at night and hide in dark places, including:

- Under and behind electrical, heating and cooking appliances;
- Under washing and hand washing facilities;
- Under and in boxes, packaging and food storage containers;
- Inside wall cavities;
- In cracks and crevices;
- Behind equipment.

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Pest control *continued...*

The *Food Standards Code* requires food businesses to take all practicable measures to prevent pests entering the food premises; eradicate and prevent the harbourage of pests on the food premises. Practicable measures to prevent pests from entering include sealing all holes, gaps and cracks in walls and ceilings; installing and maintaining flyscreens to windows and door openings; keeping doors closed when not in use; installing weather strips at the base of doors.

Practicable measures to eradicate and prevent harbourage of pests include:

- regular checks for signs of pests;
- maintaining the food premises and equipment in a clean condition (a cleaning schedule may assist);
- keeping food covered in sealed containers;
- storing food, equipment and food containers above the floor;
- keeping bin areas clean and tidy;
- removing rubbish regularly and making sure that external areas are clean and well-maintained;
- removing unused equipment and fixtures from the premises; and
- implementing a suitable pest control program which may require the services of a licensed pest controller.

While using the services of a licensed pest controller is not a legal requirement, it can help you to demonstrate that you are taking all practicable measures to eradicate and prevent harbourage of pests. A licensed pest controller should provide you with written reports of each treatment, including any pest activity, chemicals used and recommended actions required.

If you perform pest control treatments yourself, make sure that any chemicals or baits used are suitable and approved for use in food premises and do not contaminate food or food contact surfaces.

Defrosting frozen food

When food is frozen it stops bacteria from growing but it does not kill the bacteria. This is why you always need to defrost food correctly so that the bacteria do not continue to grow and cause food poisoning.

What are the rules for defrosting food?

- Defrost food thoroughly before cooking or reheating.
- Defrost frozen food either in a microwave, or in the fridge. If using the fridge, defrost food on the bottom shelf, away from other foods just in case it drips as it is defrosting. You can keep fully defrosted food in the fridge for a short time until it is ready to be cooked or reheated.
- Cook or reheat the food immediately if defrosted in the microwave.

Do not re-freeze defrosted food!

Do not defrost food on the bench!

You should always:

- Defrost food in a refrigerator or microwave.
- Allow plenty of time to defrost thoroughly, especially for large objects that take longer to defrost all of the way to the centre, such as large chickens or other pieces of meat.

How to improve inspection ratings

The most common issues identified during inspections are where food businesses fail to:

1. Clean the food premises and equipment: under benches, behind, inside equipment and appliances; grease traps; floors; storage areas.
2. Have hand washing facilities that are readily accessible, dedicated to hand washing and have a supply of warm, running potable water, soap and single-use paper towels.
3. Control pest issues such as cockroaches and mice: evidence of infestation; waste containers must be covered; areas protected from pests with flyscreens, etc.
4. Keep high risk food at the correct temperatures (hot enough or cold enough) during both display and storage; have a food temperature measuring device.
5. Cover food during storage and protect it from contamination.
6. Make sure that maintenance issues within the food premises, including equipment, are identified and repairs/replacement are attended to promptly. The outside of the premises should also be inspected for maintenance issues.

Perform a self check

Use the inspection report that was left with you at your last inspection to do a self assessment.

Ensure that you have completed any items that were addressed during the last inspection. These items are generally marked with a [x] on the inspection report or listed at the bottom of the inspection report under the heading 'Actions Required/Comments'.

Your aim (and ours) is for the inspection report to be marked with only ticks [✓].

Be allergy aware

A food allergy is an immune system response to a food protein that the body mistakenly believes is harmful. It is not the result of food contaminated by a toxin and is not the same as a food intolerance. A food intolerance is the inability to properly digest or fully process certain foods. The most common intolerances include lactose, gluten, yeast and sulphite.

There is no cure for a food allergy. Avoidance is the only way to prevent a reaction. Symptoms can include hives, swelling of the lips, face and eyes, abdominal pain, vomiting, swelling of the tongue, breathing difficulty, dizziness or collapse. Some symptoms can be fatal.

What can you do?

Take customer requests about allergies seriously. Everyone from the manager through to the food preparation and services staff need to be aware of the risks food allergies pose and be clear on how to identify and manage them.

Allergy aware checklist

Know your products

- Only accept correctly labelled foods.
- Check all ingredients even in sauces, spices, garnish oils, dressings, etc. for allergens.
- Avoid ingredient substitution.

Educate staff

- Train and test your staff regularly in food safety, hygiene and allergen awareness.
- Teach staff of their obligation to declare certain allergens.
- Display 'allergy aware' posters.

Ensure good preparation and hygiene practices

- Always double check the ingredients with the chef or cook.
- Handle food safely. Start fresh for meals that must be allergen free.
- Clean and sanitise work surfaces, utensils and other food-contact items between foods. Even trace amounts can be harmful.
- Store food safely.
- Have a dedicated area for preparing allergen free meals (be aware that food that is safe for one person with a food allergy may be unsafe for another person with food allergy).
- Whenever possible, prepare foods for people with a food allergy first.

Communicate with your customers

- Take customer requests about allergens seriously. Listen carefully.
- Give customers accurate information about the content of meals if they ask.
- Have a specific protocol to follow if a customer says they are allergic.
- Place the name of known allergens next to the menu items.

Hamburger food safety

Hamburgers are a popular form of ready to eat foods, however, they can serve as a vehicle for pathogenic bacteria, and if not cooked, handled or stored properly, can potentially lead to food poisoning once consumed.

Undercooking meat, poultry and other foods can be very dangerous. Raw meat and poultry can contain harmful bacteria, such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

- Proper cooking of hamburger patties minimises the risk of food poisoning.
- Keeping everything clean is critical to improving food safety.
- Cool down cooked burger patties quickly if intended to store.
- Keep raw and cooked food separate.
- Do not allow leaking juices to drip on other foods.
- Refrigerate or freeze minced meat as soon as possible after purchase.

In order to reduce the potential for food-borne illness, mince meat should be cooked right through to the centre. No pink should be visible and juices should run clear. As a guide, hamburgers should be cooked so that the internal temperature of the patty reaches at least 71°C.

Never allow ready-to-eat foods like lettuce, tomatoes or cheese to come in contact with raw meats or its juices.



The correct use of cutting and serving boards

Wooden and plastic cutting boards, along with serving boards are all safe to use in the kitchen, however, as with any surface that comes into contact with food items, their cleanliness and maintenance are key to preventing microbial cross-contamination.

Avoid cross-contamination

Always avoid cutting ready-to-eat food, such as bread or salad on a board that has been used to trim raw meat, poultry and seafood without washing and sanitising the board first. To wash and sanitise a board properly, attention should be given to the grooves, scratches, gouges and cuts that may form on the board.

Food should not be prepared or served on boards with deep gouges and cuts because of the risk of cross contamination from trapped bacteria and viruses hidden in these marks.

If cutting and serving boards cannot be effectively cleaned, and sanitised because of damage to the surface they should be replaced with new boards.



Cleaning and protecting boards

Boards used for the preparation of food must be washed with hot soapy water and rinsed with clean water before being air dried or patted dry with clean paper towels. Following the cleaning process, both wooden and plastic boards can then be sanitised.

Replacement of boards

All cutting boards should be replaced periodically due to inevitable surface wear or, as soon as they become too worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves.

I'm ALERT Free online food safety training program

THE TOWN OF BASSENDEAN provides free, unlimited access to the I'm ALERT Food Handler Training Program to assist food handlers in gaining valuable skills and knowledge in food safety and hygiene. This program is presented in an interactive, easy to follow and entertaining format and includes the ability for the user to print off an acknowledgement form and a certificate upon completion of the program that can be kept as a part of staff records.

The program assists food business managers in ensuring all staff are trained in this important area and thereby reducing any risk of food borne illness resulting from poor food handling practices. It is recommended that all food handlers within your food business take part in this training. This is a great opportunity to provide all your staff with training that would otherwise cost your business money and a great deal more in time.

To access the training program please visit: www.bassendean.imalert.com.au



Recent prosecutions in WA | Department of Health website

A restaurant in the City of Stirling was prosecuted for issues relating to food storage, cleanliness and maintenance. They were fined \$105,000 and were required to pay costs, which was an additional \$2,514.50.

A supermarket in the City of Kwinana was prosecuted for issues relating to cleanliness and selling food past the use-by-date. They were fined \$11,000 and were required to pay costs, which was an additional \$2,523.50.

A cafe in the City of Nedlands was prosecuted for issues relating to cleanliness and maintenance. They were fined

\$24,000 and were required to pay costs, which was an additional \$4102.30.

A restaurant in the City of Canning was prosecuted for issues relating to food storage, hand washing, cleanliness and pest control. They were fined \$54,000 and were required to pay costs, which was an additional \$14,000.



For more information on recent prosecutions visit the List of offenders available at http://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Food-offenders/Publication-of-names-of-offenders-list