

# COVID-19

## Food Safety during a changing business model

### Introduction

This guidance is designed to support businesses in identifying how they can adapt or change business as usual. These changes should assist Jersey in flattening the curve to help our health services support Islanders affected by the COVID-19 virus.

Business owners have three critical areas to consider:

- Protection of staff and their families through social distancing
- Protection of customers and their families through social distancing
- Protection of customers from food poisoning or contamination of food.

There is economic support available and this advice can be found at [www.gov.je/coronavirus](http://www.gov.je/coronavirus), as can health advice for you and your employees. This document provides guidance on social distancing and adapting your food management safety system during these challenging times.

The availability of food for Islanders remains critical to society. There is currently no evidence that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus.

We recommend you review the Government of Jersey business information daily, as things are changing rapidly.

You will need to undertake a review of your food safety management system for your new business model and the following should assist with the additional points to consider.

## Overarching principles

With the increase in takeaway and food delivery due to COVID-19, the Government of Jersey is urging food businesses to take extra care when it comes to food handling.

### Maintain a two-metre distance between everyone

Social distancing guidelines have to be followed at every stage of food production. This includes supplier delivery, food preparation and service. The 2 metre distance between all individuals associated with your business must be kept wherever possible.

Many of our Island's kitchens are small. In times of social distancing this makes it difficult for usual staffing levels to be maintained. The maximum permitted levels of staffing within the kitchen is that which prevents staff from generally coming within 2 metres of one another.

You must assess how many members of staff can safely undertake their work, whilst meeting the requirements of social distancing. This can include separation by area or by time. You must also assess how reduction in staffing may impact on food safety.

Restaurants may consider using areas previously used as customer areas for certain aspects of food preparation.

### **Do not prepare and handle food if you're feeling unwell**

If you or an employee are feeling unwell, don't handle or prepare food for the public.

Self-isolation may be required. You may be entitled to sickness benefit if you are self-isolating due to Covid-19 symptoms. More information can be accessed [here](#).

### **Wash your hands, maintain personal hygiene**

This is more important than ever, especially for anyone working to prepare food for the public. Wash your hands thoroughly and regularly and maintain good personal hygiene.

Ensure hand-washing facilities have a constant supply of warm running water, soap and single use paper towel at all times.

More information on handwashing and other Covid-19 health information can be accessed [here](#).

### **Cook food thoroughly**

Ensure food is cooked thoroughly, which means reaching a core food temperature of 75°C or above and/or ensuring juices run clear. Read more tips on cooking food thoroughly [here](#).

### **Cleaning and sanitising**

Normal cleaning and sanitation measures will minimize risk of infection. Keep your food premises clean at all times during operation. Sanitizing food contact surfaces is also crucial in ensuring germs aren't spread. Where possible, use your dishwasher for all food contact items. More information on cleaning your kitchen can be accessed [here](#).

### **Staffing levels**

One of the major health risks associated with any change in staffing numbers / style of operation / increased demands in a kitchen is that of food poisoning. The most recent UK study found that 35% of cases of norovirus could be linked back to poor hygiene practices within the catering industry.

We encourage you to adapt to survive during this period of uncertainty, but not at the risk to the health of your customers.

Know your staff. An employee that won't be paid if they don't work is less likely to adhere to the requirement to self-isolate. What steps do you take to ensure the fitness to work of your employees? Will you be taking temperatures before allowing them to work their shift?

If you change your process to one that, for example, requires a blast chiller and you have neither a blast chiller and / or the appropriately trained staff to use this, then this process cannot go ahead.

### **Maintaining food hygiene during reduced staffing and/or change of operation**

During the outbreak staffing levels are likely to reduce due to illness or self-isolation and protection of employees if they have underlying health concerns or are pregnant.

It is unlikely you will be able to maintain current production levels safely as these conditions arise. It is therefore essential to consider what you will do to maintain food hygiene during this time

Top tips:

- Reduce the size of your menu
- Limit the number of meals you can serve to a level that remains safe
- Remove more complex meals
- Replace raw with ready cooked
- Replace food needs preparation with ready prepared food.

**#Before considering any measures you must consider whether you have sufficient available staff to meet the safety requirements for your employees and customers.**

Many of the techniques used for preventing cross contamination of food by unwell employees or members of the public remains the same. However all businesses must assess how this is controlled during this outbreak.

## **Takeaway**

### **Payment**

Ensure customers queue according to the latest requirements for social distancing (2 metres). Using tape for visual control can assist with queuing.

Take only contactless payment. Split the bill where necessary. Or pre-pay before delivery. If another form of payment is required, assess how you prevent cross contamination between payee and your business.

## **Hot holding food safely**

Keeping food warm for prolonged periods of time is dangerous and could lead to food poisoning. It is best to cook food and then send out for delivery straight away. If this is not possible then the food will have to be hot held.

Storing food at warm temperatures for a prolonged period of time can lead to food poisoning. Food must be cooled down to room temperature as quickly as possible then refrigerated (maximum 90 minutes from start to finish) or kept hot at 63 degrees. More information on keeping food hot can be accessed [here](#).

## **Cooling down potentially hazardous foods rapidly**

Any food you cook and cool down for later use must be cooled as quickly as possible. Cool food faster by portioning into small quantities, using shallow trays, using ice or better still using a blast chiller. More information on cooling methods can be accessed [here](#)

## **Allergen requests**

When an order is placed either online or on the phone you must ask the customer if they have any allergies. If you can't cater for a customer with specific allergic requirements you must say, do not guess or take chances with allergies as this could lead to serious consequences. More information on managing allergens in your business can be accessed [here](#).

# **Pre-prepared meals**

## **Labelling of “cook at home food”**

Food that is cooked and cooled by the food business and then re-heated by the customer must be carried out safely.

The product must be labelled by the food business and contain the following:

- Product
- List of ingredients
- Name of company that prepared it
- Instructions for storage / cooking
- Use by date.

A label on the food item must indicate to the customer that this food should only be re-heated once and to which temperature. The label should also dictate storage instructions and food durability.

## **‘Help yourself’ areas**

Some establishments provide service through salad bars, hot hold and cold pastry areas and similar, for example bread decanters with tongues.

These areas must be suspended during the outbreak due to the following factors:

- Hand contact with produce / tongs increases the risk of cross contamination
- The food is more prone to being coughed or sneezed on
- The recommended 2 meter separation becomes increasingly difficult to manage due to increased customer time at these areas.

### **Bring your own**

Cancel 'bring your own' options such as coffee mugs and food containers. Those businesses that depend on this style of service must consider short term alternatives.

## **Pre-prepared items for use at home**

If using a vac pac you must prevent potential cross contamination between raw and ready to eat product. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and if you can't safely separate choose to use it for **either** raw or ready to eat product.

Label the product correctly:

- What it is, including allergens
- Company name
- Storage instructions
- Use-by date (extended if the product is vac pac'd)
- When to consume once opened.

### **Allergens**

Consider whether use of a vac pac will introduce cross contamination of allergens and how you control this.

## **Deliveries**

### **Payment**

All food must be pre-paid for in advance to avoid contact with the delivery driver.

When placing the order the customer should state a safe place for the food to be left and a number to ring to alert the customer that the food has arrived.

### **Allergen requests**

When an order is placed either online or on the phone you must ask the customer if they have any allergies.

If you can't cater for a customer with specific allergic requirements you must say.

Do not guess or take chances with allergies as this could lead to serious consequences, including death of the customer. More information on managing allergens in your business can be accessed [here](#).

## **Delivery**

The delivery driver should not accept tips during this time of infectious disease.

The delivery vehicle must be clean and free from any other items that could potentially contaminate the food.

The delivery driver should be the only person in the vehicle, to support social distancing.

The food should be left in the safe place as stated on the order. The delivery driver may then contact the customer to advise the order has been delivered.