

Food Safety Newsletter

Winter Edition – August 2019

Welcome to the winter edition of the Limestone Coast Food Safety Newsletter.

This edition marks the second collaboration between the Limestone Coast councils.

In focus this edition:

- What is a food business?
- Food business notification
- Food waste
- Fermentation of food
- Upcoming regional food safety training – TAFE SA short course

What constitutes the sale of food?

Food businesses need to comply with the requirements of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, but how do you know if your food activities are legally captured?

Food business activities can take the shape of the obvious coffee shop or restaurant, where the proprietor would generally anticipate a visit from the 'health inspector' from time to time. But would a childcare centre or gift shop consider themselves in the business of selling food?

The legislation recognises that food is sold through many avenues. A business supplying food with accommodation, service or entertainment as an inclusive package is one such example. The childcare centre offering meals as part of the overall care service is considered a high risk type of food business because of the vulnerability of the young children. Even raffles, the provision of food prizes, bartering, and promotional giveaways fit the brief and the definition of a food sale.

Food businesses need to complete Food Business Notification for the Council in which they are based. This process is free of charge and informs SA Health and the Council who is involved in the business, what type of foods are handled, and the scale of the business. This information helps to determine the risk classification for the business, which is used to establish an inspection frequency. Contact details must be kept current by operator in the event the business is implicated in a food poisoning outbreak or food recall.

Council Environmental Health Officers assess both the physical food preparation setting and the processes. We offer advice and seek to educate food handlers around the risks.

We recognise that the inspection process can be a bit daunting and depending on the risk classification profile of your business, you may not even need a visit.

Two new food business guides are available via the Food Safety web page at www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au for further operation and/or construction fit-out information.



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The War on Waste

Businesses can generate a lot of waste. This not only costs money, but can be bad for the environment. Visit City of Mount Gambier website for tips on how to reduce waste and recycle correctly: <https://www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au/sustainability/environmental/waste-recycling-educational>

Did you know?

The Government estimates over 5 million tonnes of food ends up in landfill every year – enough to fill 9,000 Olympic sized swimming pools. Food waste costs the Australian economy \$20 billion each year.

When food waste is put in general rubbish bins it ends up in landfill. This creates methane and leachate, both have the potential to pollute the environment. It's also a waste of resources. Consider how your business can reduce food waste, and make sure unavoidable food waste does not end up in general waste bins.

Fermentation of Food

What is fermentation?

When a food ferments it undergoes a microbial process, where yeasts, bacteria or moulds break it down into by-products. Sugars become food acids (such as in yoghurts, kombucha, and sauerkraut) and/or alcohol (e.g. beer and wine). Alcohol can in turn become a food acid (i.e. vinegar).

Food acids have preservative qualities, as they reduce the food's pH and thus stop or slow the growth of many food poisoning or spoilage bacteria.

However, food poisoning bacteria can remain an issue for fermented/acidified products. Clostridium botulinum is the greatest concern in this regard. A pH above 4.6 increases the risk of the spores of this particular bacteria germinating and producing toxins.

Ensuring food safety in acidified and fermented foods requires:

- undamaged / good quality raw ingredients
- prevention of contamination at all stages of production
- well controlled fermentation processes

For more information about the food safety elements concerning fermented foods contact your local environmental health officer.

Food Safety Training

- An accredited TAFE SA Short Course is proposed for 23 September 2019 at Mount Gambier City Hall. The course runs for 3.5 hours and the cost is from \$30. Bookings are essential. For further information or to enrol contact TAFE SA on (08) 8348 4662.
- Free online 'I'm Alert' refresher training suitable for volunteers - visit City of Mount Gambier Food Safety page www.mountgambier.sa.gov.au/foodsafety