



Steve Pepper Training Associates

How to achieve and
maintain a good
“Food Hygiene Rating”

Café and Restaurant Edition



By following the advice given out in this book you should be able to achieve and maintain a good Food Hygiene Rating for your business

£30.00

FOOD SAFETY

How to achieve and maintain a good food hygiene rating.

This booklet is aimed at giving you enough knowledge and information to ensure that you can achieve and maintain a high food hygiene rating.

I also have a lot of hints and tips at the end of this document on creating a good first impression to your inspector.

Registration

Firstly in the UK all food businesses must by law register their food businesses at least 28 days before they start trading. The form is usually held on the local authority website.

Once you have registered for trading as a food business or informed them of any changes to your business, then this is likely to trigger a visit from your local Environmental Health Department.

At this visit they will give a rating on the food standards Agency's Food Hygiene Rating System. There is a Scottish equivalent called the "**Food Hygiene Information System**" where the score is based on a pass or fail grading.

It is important to understand what changes you must report so anything that significantly changes the potential for something to go wrong you need to report.

A quick phone call to the local authority to check will help. Also keep a note of the date, time and person you spoke to or better simply send them an email requesting a response.

Things like change of ownership, providing a different service (take away etc.), changing over to sous vide or cook chill are the sort of things you need to inform them of.

How the food safety inspection and the Food Hygiene Rating System actually works

Health inspectors or as they prefer to be called Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs), have to follow a set code of conduct, which is updated on a regular basis.

This code of practice is called “Food Law” and runs to many pages. It’s more of a reference document rather than light bedtime reading.

For example using the code of practice the frequency of visits and “Interventions” can be used and will need several factors to be taken into consideration i.e. The target group, the style of catering etc., will all be scored.

That is why places like hospitals; schools and nurseries will always have a higher score on the planning review and will therefore get visited more frequently.

At the time of writing the Food Standards is reviewing the overall inspection regime and there is a link to the current work they are carrying out here:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/regulation/regulating-our-future>

Basically they look at three areas on the inspection:

1/Structure (Including cleanliness)

2/Handling practices (including temperature control, storage of food etc.

3/Confidence in management (Paperwork)



How the Food Hygiene Rating is achieved

Each of these three areas is scored and the range of the scores is "0" = good to 30 = "Poor".

It's then simply a case of doing the maths and working out what the overall score is. The ratings range from "0" = Urgent improvement necessary up to "5" very good.



To get a rating of "5" you can have a score of 15 but any individual score of more than "5" and you won't be able to achieve this. So if you had scores of "0", "5" and "10" then you would only be awarded a FHR of "4"

How the new national food hygiene ratings will be calculated						
Total score	0 - 15	20	25 - 30	35 - 40	45 - 50	> 50
Additional scoring factor	No score > 5	No score > 10	No score > 10	No score > 15	No score > 20	-
Rating	5 (top)	4	3	2	1	0 (bottom)
Explanation of hygiene standards	Very good	Good	Generally satisfactory	Improvement necessary	Major improvement necessary	Urgent improvement necessary

The food hygiene rating given depends on how well the business does overall and the area(s) that need improving the most.

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

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There is an appeals procedure if you think this is unfair and you can evidence something about the audit that for example was missing at the time of inspection. Once you have been given a rating than you are stuck with it for a minimum of 3 months. The LA may charge you for a revisit but the inspection will again be unannounced and in theory could go up or down depending on what they find.

Structure and Cleanliness

Appropriate Layout

Is the size and layout of the premises conducive to the activities of the business? Are all the Ceilings, walls, doors, windows, floor wall joints and flooring of suitable, inert, washable, smooth, non toxic materials?

Is the unit capable of being cleaned (including deep cleaning) and in good condition? Suitable materials would include smooth ceilings or suspended ceiling tiles, flush fitting lighting, stainless or polypropylene wall boarding, anti slip floor material covering with coved floor wall joints.

As long as it is in an impact free area then eggshell or vinyl silk is appropriate for a smooth plaster wall as it is washable.

Tiles are not illegal, wall or floor, but they should be in good condition and the grouting should be clean. Sink areas should have clean smooth sealant on the rear of the sink. All Utensils and equipment should be of suitable quality i.e. stainless steel, polypropylene. No wood, chrome, mild steel and ideally colour coded knives and boards free from rivets would be an example of good practice.

Oven cloths should be boil washed daily and kept off food surfaces. Single use disposable cloths are preferable to non-disposable even if these are boil washed.

Pest Control

Ideally a British Pest Control Association member (BPCA) should be contracted to deal with pests.

They should be available on a 24-hour callout, undertake a pre-contract survey. Contractors should be accompanied on all visits, it is important that any **bait stations should be individually dated**. Contractors and other visitors should be issued with single use disposable suitable coats and hats (light coloured).

Ventilation

Basically there is no set number of changes per hour but kitchens are very warm places and the ventilation should be adequately keep the production area as cool as is reasonably possible.

Hand Washing Facilities

A separate dedicated hand wash sink with hot/cold or mixed water supply should be in place. Best practice dictates that it should have **soap (BS EN 1499)** and **Alcohol Gel (BS EN 1500)**. It is also a legal requirement to have drying facilities. A pedal operated bin with a close fitted lid is also best practice.

Food Handling Practices

Preparation

Basically this is to ensure that food is sourced from a reputable supplier with traceability.

Food should be delivered in appropriate conditions i.e. food temperature (if not ambient); Correct Date codes “use by” and “best before”. An “**Organoleptic**” inspection of all deliveries including the state of the delivery van and driver should be taken. Also at delivery you should be looking for things like pest activity, packaging materials. If there is anything you are not sure of then simply refuse delivery and if appropriate change suppliers.

Food should be stored in appropriate pest proof containers that are labelled and have lids, labels to show contents and have any allergen information put on them. I would also keep the original label on file and not “top up” but use a clean container, every time a refill is needed.

Food should then be placed in the appropriate fridge/freezer or dry store. It is important that any frozen food is correctly thawed out. Preferably in a clean container with a cover and labelled and dated. If the food is raw then this should be stored below cooked Ready to Eat food.

On no account should poultry be thawed out in a sink or washed as this will simply spread any bacteria onto work surfaces

Food should be prepared in the appropriate area and allowing for no microbial or allergenic cross contamination. i.e. using colour codes and separate equipment. If you don't have enough space to designate a separate area then you must ensure that a six stage break clean takes place with a suitable disinfectant BS EN 1276 or BS EN 13697.

Cooking Reheating

Food should be rapidly cooked to a suitable core temperature i.e. +75oC for 30 seconds (good practice in England) and +82oC for reheating in Scotland (legal requirement).

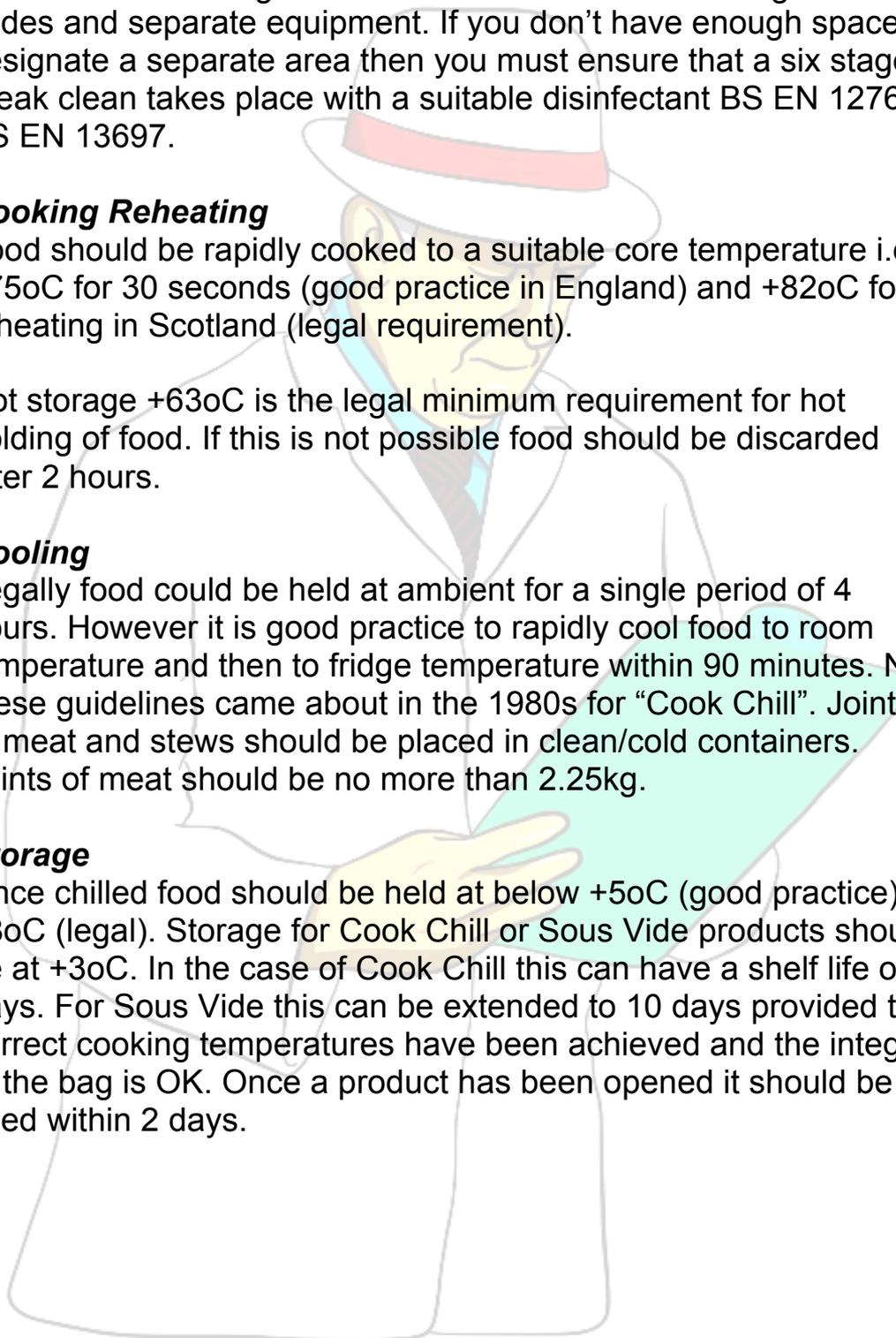
Hot storage +63oC is the legal minimum requirement for hot holding of food. If this is not possible food should be discarded after 2 hours.

Cooling

Legally food could be held at ambient for a single period of 4 hours. However it is good practice to rapidly cool food to room temperature and then to fridge temperature within 90 minutes. NB these guidelines came about in the 1980s for "Cook Chill". Joints of meat and stews should be placed in clean/cold containers. Joints of meat should be no more than 2.25kg.

Storage

Once chilled food should be held at below +5oC (good practice) or +8oC (legal). Storage for Cook Chill or Sous Vide products should be at +3oC. In the case of Cook Chill this can have a shelf life of 5 days. For Sous Vide this can be extended to 10 days provided the correct cooking temperatures have been achieved and the integrity of the bag is OK. Once a product has been opened it should be used within 2 days.



Confidence in Management

Appropriate systems and checked in place to ensure food is safe to eat.

Basically most caterers have Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) or their Scottish or Northern Ireland equivalent. Full-blown HACCP is usually the reserve of Manufacturers or large-scale caterers.

SFBB is a very basic system based on the 4 Cs of catering. cross contamination, cleaning, chilling and cooking/reheating

There is also a management system at the end of this, which covers things like opening/closing checks, daily diary, 4 weekly checks, safe systems, training records, supplier and contact details etc.

It should be said that in addition there are numerous things like temperature checks with a calibrated probe, fitness for work, hand washing procedures, training records etc. that should be added to the list for completeness.

Staff know and follow rules

Basically on an inspection the EHO/P will tend to question the staff on the shop floor rather than the management team. They will also observe staff on how they prepare food and how they undertake hand washing. Also they will expect them to have clean overalls and the BHA Catering guide says that it is best practice to have light coloured, clean overalls, Which ideally should be laundered on the premises and not worn between home and work.

If you haven't got a copy of the latest version of SFBB then you can download it from my website:

www.steve-pepper.co.uk/Sales.html

Industry Guideline for Catering

It's probably worth mentioning at this point that there is a Good Practice guide for Caterers from the British Hospitality Association, which is available from the Highfield website.

Cost at the time of writing is £16 per copy. There are smart phone and tablet versions of these available that are just over half the price of the printed version.

<https://www.highfield.co.uk/products/item/358/catering-guide/>

Tips for good practice

The following tips will help you create the right impression.

There is an old saying that you never get a 2nd chance to create a good 1st impression!

1/Personal Hygiene. Ensure you and your staff have clean, light coloured overalls rather than “Black Whites”. These aren't a legal requirement but white chefs jackets simply look better than black, which don't readily show the “muck”. I'd also have hair tied back and effective headwear. Again it's not a legal requirement but looks more professional and gives you a “**due diligence**” defence for having hair in your food.

Also adopt a “**white coat**” policy of visitor's coats and hats (single use disposable) and ensure anyone who enters the prep area wears them. This would include:

Pest contractors, maintenance staff, delivery people and not forgetting EHO/Ps

2/Fitness to work

This is a Food Standards Agency document first issued in 2009. I would ensure that you download a copy from the link and ensure all food handlers have their own copy. I would also ask that any people entering the food preparation area sign the declaration at the back of the guide and keep it on file at the back of the SFBB pack. Again I would keep an amount of these available at the entrance and I would ensure that the EHO/P signs one when they enter your premises.

You need a declaration for all new and existing staff, visitors including maintenance staff and pest contractors, delivery people. They should be signing a new one on returning from an illness, on return from abroad or if they have been dealing with a sick relative.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/guidancenotes/hygguid/foodhandlersguide>

3/Hand washing notices

I would suggest downloading the free hand wash poster available on my website. Print it out, laminate it and put it near the hand wash sink. Only use Pritt stick or double sided tape not blu tak or drawing pins.

4/Hand washing Training

On SFBB one of the first declaration asks if you train your staff to wash their hands Yes or No. Most people simply tick yes but haven't got any proof that they have trained the staff. I would suggest obtaining some UV LED light and UV cream to test and see if staff are washing their hands properly and then follow this with a suitable video and then record the fact that you have trained them.

5/Structure

Make sure that you don't have any bare wood or unpainted/rough surfaces. Get rid of knives and equipment that has wooden handles or rivets. Colour coded knives and boards look a lot better and show you understand about cross contamination.

6/Cleaning materials

Make sure you buy these from a single reputable supplier. A list of suppliers can be found on this link and the relevant BS EN 1276 and BS EN13697 disinfectants are listed. Suggest go for one with a short contact time. <http://www.disinfectant-info.co.uk>

7/Food Information

There is a free to download handbook on food safety on my website www.steve-pepper.co.uk . I would download this, print it out and have a reference copy on the SFBB file. I would also have a reference to the BHA Catering Guide.

In conclusion

By having all these in place you will be able to demonstrate to an EHO/P that you have everything under control and create a good first impression.

This will go a long way to impressing them.

Hopefully providing every thing else is OK should help you get a good Food Hygiene Rating.

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