All Saints and St Richard's Church

Food Safety and Hygiene Guidance for Volunteers

1. Introduction

Hospitality is an important part of church life. This guidance helps volunteers and staff prepare, transport, serve and store food safely while meeting legal requirements and good practice standards.

This guidance adopts the recommendations from the Food Standard Agency. It applies to activities where food or refreshments are prepared at church whether by staff or volunteers and also to food refreshments prepared elsewhere and served at church. It also applied to the serving of food or refreshments prepared to be used at other locations e.g. FEST

Food safety is particularly important for:

- Young children
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- People with weakened immune systems

All volunteers involved in preparing, transporting or serving food should read this guidance before taking part in a church event.

While we take this guidance seriously, individuals with allergies or dietary requirements remain responsible for checking ingredients before consuming any food.

2. Responsibilities

Ministry / Team leaders should ensure that each catering event should have a nominated person responsible for food safety.

This person should have read this guidance and;

- Be familiar with the church kitchen and equipment.
- Collect information about dietary requirements and allergies.
- Ensure volunteers understand allergen requirements.
- Oversee opening and closing checks.
- Ensure food is prepared, transported and served safely.

For events involving cooking or reheating food, it is recommended that the responsible person completes a recognised Level 2 Food Hygiene and Allergen Awareness course. This can be done online through food-safety.org.uk at the cost of £10.

3. Kitchen Management and Safety

Before Using the Kitchen

- Keep coats, bags and personal belongings away from food preparation areas.
- Wash hands thoroughly using the designated handwashing sink.
- Wear a clean apron and tie back hair where appropriate.
- Check that the refrigerator temperature is **5°C or below**.
- Ensure work surfaces and equipment are clean before use.

- Blue cloths are to be used on surfaces and red for floor.
- Report accidents using the accident book provided.
- Know the location of the first aid kit and fire extinguisher.
- Cover any cuts with blue plasters.

Illness

Anyone who has experienced vomiting or diarrhoea must not prepare or serve food until they have been symptom-free for at least **48 hours**.

4. The Four Principles of Food Safety

Cross Contamination

Cross contamination occurs when harmful bacteria spread between food, equipment or surfaces.

To prevent this:

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate.
- Store raw meat on the bottom shelf of refrigerators.
- Wash hands after handling raw meat.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly before use.
- Use separate utensils and chopping boards.

Colour-coded chopping boards:

- Red – Raw meat
- Blue – Raw fish
- Yellow – Cooked meat
- Green – Fruit and salad
- Brown – Vegetables
- White – Bakery and dairy products

Cleaning

- Wash hands thoroughly before handling food.
- Clean and sanitise food preparation surfaces before use.
- Clean equipment between tasks.
- Use the two-stage cleaning method:
    1. Wash with hot soapy water.
    2. Sanitise with antibacterial spray.

Chilling

- Refrigerated food must be kept at **5°C or below**.
- Transport chilled food in cool bags, using ice packs when necessary.
- Refrigerate food as soon as possible after arrival.
- High-risk foods should not remain at room temperature for more than **3 hours**.

When cooling cooked food:

- Cool as quickly as possible.
- Refrigerate within **90 minutes**.

- Divide large quantities into smaller containers to speed cooling.

Cooking

- Food must be thoroughly cooked or reheated to a core temperature of **75°C**.
- Use the church probe thermometer to check temperatures.
- Refer to specific information if using a slow cooker.
- Poultry, burgers, sausages and similar products must be cooked all the way through with no pink colouring remaining.
- Reheat food only once.

Hot Holding

- Hot food must be maintained at **63°C or above**.
- If food cannot be held above 63°C, it should be eaten within two hours or refrigerated.

5. Food Purchasing and Traceability

Food should be obtained from reputable suppliers.

Where practical:

- Keep receipts for purchased ingredients.
- Ensure all products are within their use-by dates.
- Store food according to manufacturer instructions.

These records assist with traceability should a food safety issue arise.

6. Preparing Food at Home for Church Events

Volunteers preparing food at home should follow the same hygiene standards expected in the church kitchen.

Planning

- Consider dietary requirements and allergens.
- Follow the church's nut-free guidance.
- Avoid raw egg products such as homemade mayonnaise.
- Keep cream-based desserts refrigerated.
- Defrost frozen meat in a refrigerator, not at room temperature.

Preparation

- Wash hands thoroughly.
- Wear a clean apron.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen.
- Clean and sanitise surfaces and equipment before use.
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate.

Transport

- Use clean covered containers.
- Transport chilled foods in cool bags.
- Minimise the time between home refrigeration and church refrigeration.

7. Slow Cooker Guidance

When using slow cookers:

- Always thaw meat or poultry before cooking.
- Begin with a clean slow cooker.
- If food has been cooked in advance, cool quickly and refrigerate.
- Food being reheated must first be rapidly reheated on a hob or in a microwave before transferring to a pre-heated slow cooker.
- Reheated food must reach **75°C** before serving.
- Maintain a holding temperature of **63°C or above**.

8. Serving Food Safely

When serving food:

- Keep food covered where possible.
- Use serving utensils rather than hands.
- Use clean serving surfaces and tables.
- Keep hot foods hot and chilled foods chilled.
- Clearly identify dishes and provide ingredient information when requested.

9. Allergen Information

All volunteers should be prepared to provide information about ingredients used in food.

The 14 major allergens are:

- Celery
- Cereals containing gluten
- Crustaceans
- Eggs
- Fish
- Lupin
- Milk
- Molluscs
- Mustard
- Peanuts
- Sesame
- Soya
- Sulphur dioxide / sulphites
- Tree nuts

Church Nut-Free Guidance

To reduce risk to those with severe allergies:

- Volunteers should avoid using nuts and nut products.
- If a purchased food item may contain nuts or traces of nuts, this must be clearly declared.

Labelling Homemade Food

Food brought from home should include:

- Name of cook or baker
- Date made
- Date frozen (if applicable)
- Date defrosted (if applicable)
- Ingredients list
- Allergen information

10. Cake Bakers

Cake bakers should:

- Follow the same hygiene standards as other food volunteers.
- Avoid nuts.
- Avoid fresh cream fillings unless appropriate refrigeration can be maintained.
- Clearly label cakes with ingredients and allergen information including if item have previously been frozen.

11. Closing the Kitchen

At the end of an event:

- Wash and sanitise equipment.
- Return items to their correct storage locations.
- Clean work surfaces, sinks and cooking equipment.
- Empty bins and replace liners.
- No food from the event to be left on the premises.
- Discard used cleaning cloths.
- Dispose of leftover milk, juices, squash and other perishable items.
- Turn off appliances, including main water (unless timed) close windows and switch off lights.
- Ensure tea towels, aprons and tablecloths are washed and returned promptly.
- Close windows and turn off lights.

12. BBQ Safety

When running BBQ events:

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate.
- Use separate utensils, plates and chopping boards for raw and cooked food
- Wash hands after handling raw meat.
- Cook meat thoroughly and check it reaches **75°C** (use a probe to ensure)
- Keep salads and chilled foods refrigerated until needed.
- Cool leftovers quickly and refrigerate within 1–2 hours.
- Reheat leftovers only once and to **75°C**.

Guidance approved by the PCC in July 2026