

Providing food at community and charity events

Guidance on providing food in a village hall or other community setting for volunteers and charity groups. It includes advice on registration, certificates and allergen information.

Food supplied, sold or provided at charity or community events, such as street parties, school fetes or fundraisers, must comply with food law and be safe to eat.

Registration

If you sell or supply food for free, cook, store, handle, prepare or distribute food, you may be considered a food business and may need to [register with your local authority](#).

This includes food businesses trading:?

- at, or during a charity or fund-raising event
- from physical customer-facing premises
- from home
- from a mobile unit or temporary premises
- online (for example via social media or a website) or through distance selling (distance selling means any selling that happens without face-to-face contact with the consumer)

If the food activity is very limited and infrequent, the local authority may decide that registration is not needed. However, the food you provide should still be safe to eat and we recommend you follow food safety and hygiene best-practices. If you are unsure if you need to register or require further advice, please [contact your local authority](#) in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Allergen information

Allergen labelling law applies to [registered food businesses](#). If you are a registered food business, you will need to follow the [allergen rules](#).

If your activity does not need to be registered as a food business, you don't have to provide information for consumers about allergens present in the food as ingredients. We recommend that the more information you can provide about allergens to customers, the better it is, so that people with food hypersensitivities (allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease) can make safe choices.

Prepacked and Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) foods

Prepacked products refer to any food put into packaging before being placed on sale, e.g. the food you find in a supermarket.

PPDS is food which is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to consumers and is in this packaging before it is ordered or selected, like food to go.

Prepacked and PPDS foods are required to provide the name of the food and a full ingredients list with the [14 mandated allergens](#) emphasised within the list.

If you are serving prepacked or PPDS foods at a community or charity event, we recommend that you keep the packaging so that those with food hypersensitivities can check it for the ingredients they avoid.

Non-prepacked food

Food businesses providing non-prepacked foods (food not in packaging such as a meal or loose slices of cake) to consumers are required to provide information on any of the 14 mandated allergens contained in the food.

The food business can choose how they do this, such as:

- in writing e.g. on a menu, matrix or label
- or verbally, with a sign clearly indicating where the consumer can get this information e.g. by asking a member of staff

If you are serving a non-prepacked food at a community or charity event, like a homemade cake, we recommend that you make a note of the recipe or ingredients list so that you can provide this information to those with food hypersensitivities.

The FSA have free [Allergy and Intolerance E-learning](#) where you can learn more about managing allergens in a kitchen as well as how to cater for allergen information requirements.

Food hygiene certificates

You do not need a food hygiene certificate to make and sell food for charity events. However, you need to make sure that you handle food safely.

Keeping food safe

Following the 4Cs of food hygiene will help you prepare, make and store food safely. The 4Cs of food hygiene are:

- [cleaning](#)
- [chilling](#)
- [cooking](#)
- [avoiding cross-contamination](#)

Here are some general practical tips for when you're making food for large numbers of people:

- prepare food in advance and freeze it, if you can, but ensure the food is properly defrosted before you use it
- wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water, using hand sanitisers if hand washing facilities are not available
- always wash fresh fruit and vegetables
- keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart
- do not use food past its use-by date
- always read any cooking instructions and make sure food is properly cooked before you serve it
- ensure that food preparation areas are suitably cleaned and sanitised after use and wash any equipment you are using in hot soapy water
- keep food out of the fridge for the shortest time possible

Chilled food

Food that needs to be chilled, such as sandwich fillings served as part of a buffet, should be left out of the fridge for no more than four hours. After this time, any remaining food should be thrown away or put back in the fridge. If you put the food back in the fridge, don't let it stand around at room temperature when you serve it again.

Use-by dates

Use-by dates show how long the food remains safe to eat or drink. Check and follow the use-by dates of the food you serve. Food cannot be supplied in any circumstances if its use-by date has passed. This also applies if you are supplying people with packaged food from a food bank.

[WRAP date labelling guidance](#) provides advice on how to safely redistribute surplus food and avoid food waste.

Foods that need extra care

Some foods are more likely to cause food poisoning than others. These include:

- raw milk
- raw shellfish
- soft cheeses
- pâté
- foods containing raw egg
- cooked sliced meats

If you serve any of these foods, consult the [Foods which need extra care](#) section in the [Safer food better business pack](#).

Cakes

You can serve home-made cakes at community events. They should be safe to eat if:

- the people who make them follow good food hygiene advice
- the cakes are stored and transported safely
- a list of allergens contained in each item is provided

Making and transporting cakes

If you make a cake at home:

- always wash your hands before preparing food
- make sure that surfaces, bowls, utensils, and any other equipment are clean and sanitised
- don't use raw eggs in anything that won't be thoroughly cooked, such as icing or mousse
- keep cheesecakes and any cakes or desserts containing fresh cream in the fridge
- store cakes in a clean, sealable container, away from raw foods

On the day, when you bring in cakes from home or run the stall, you should:

- transport cakes in a clean/sanitised sealable container
- make sure that cheesecake and any cakes or desserts containing fresh cream are left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible, ideally not longer than 4 hours
- when handling cakes use tongs or a cake slice

Storing cakes

You can keep cakes and baked goods with high sugar content in:

- airtight containers - this will prevent mould growth through absorption of moisture from the atmosphere
- the fridge - cakes will last for longer, but their quality may be affected

Any cakes with high moisture additions, such as cream added after baking, should not be left at room temperature. They must be stored chilled (in the fridge) and eaten within the use-by date of the added product.

There are some types of icing, such as ganache and buttercream, that can be kept outside the fridge. It's best to store them somewhere cool and dry. Check the guidelines for storage of the particular icing product you will be using.

Using jam jars

It is safe to re-use glass jam jars occasionally to supply home-made jam or chutney as long as the jars are properly washed. If jam jars are re-used, they should be free from chips and cracks, and should be sterilised prior to each use. Well-fitting lids will also minimise any hygiene risks to the food in the jars.

The regulations on food contact materials, which may limit the re-use of jam jars, apply to businesses. If you have any concerns about the re-use of jam jars, contact your [local authority food safety team](#).