

MOBILE CATERING

Health and Safety Risks





Food from mobile catering operations presents the same food safety risks as those from shops and restaurants - and it is important that all mobile traders comply with the law.

Food traders who store their mobile van overnight in Hambleton must be registered with Hambleton District Council 28 days before trading is to start.

If any food is prepared or stored at home, the home will need to be registered as a food business. The council is looking to ensure that a good standard of hygiene and cleanliness are applied to areas where commercial food is kept or prepared.

Where Can Mobile Caterers Trade?

Every authority has different rules, so contact Hambleton District Council's Environmental Health Department before you start trading. In general:

- designated street trading consent areas, such as market pitches, usually require street trading permits - there is a fee and an application process to go through
- parking on private land must always be with the permission of the owner of the land - check for planning constraints attached to the land before coming to any agreement with a landowner
- trading from a public highway - including footpaths and verges - is generally prohibited, although there may be laybys where the provision of a mobile vehicle will be allowed. Contact the North Yorkshire County Council's Highways Team for advice
- providing hot food or drinks between the hours of 11pm and 5am is 'late night refreshment' and is a licensable activity under the Licensing Act 2003. For further information contact the district council's licensing department
- always consider the impact of your business on the neighbourhood and environment and operate in a manner that will not give rise to nuisance - such as cooking odours, noise, waste and litter.

Inspections

Before you start trading - or within the first couple of months - you will be visited by a food safety officer to ensure you are complying with the food hygiene regulations. These inspections will then take place regularly, depending on the type of food and hygiene standards noted within the van.

Food safety officers have the power to enter and inspect your vehicle at any time or place where you trade - and do not have to give prior warning.

If you are trading at shows or events you may be asked to complete a pre event food safety questionnaire. This helps the receiving authority check your authenticity and briefly assess food safety standards on the vehicle prior to the event. Keeping all your documents on the van - including details of recent inspections - will help the officer determine whether an inspection is needed at that time.

There are two main aspects of the food hygiene regulations which are equally important - vehicle structure and its cleanliness and having an effective food safety management system.



Vehicle Structure

The interior of vehicles should be constructed to be hard wearing, easy to clean and to protect food from the risk of contamination.

Fitting Equipment

- Work surfaces should be joint free and hard wearing - stainless steel or Formica with rounded front edges is best; with metal or plastic edging fitted to bare wooden edges.
- Walls and ceilings must be smooth and easy to clean - clad with a plastic type material and joints must be sealed and kept to minimum.
- Stainless steel sheeting should be provided behind fryers or similar cooking appliances as heat may otherwise melt the plastic.
- Floors should be of smooth, impervious and non-slip material and preferably coved to the wall fixtures.
- Woodwork should be painted or treated so that it can be thoroughly cleaned - gloss paint gives a hard wearing finish.

Equipment

- Arrange the equipment so that the van or stall is not cramped and can be easily cleaned. Most items should be fixed but you must be able to clean behind appliances.
- Wooden equipment such as cutting boards should not be used - use plastic boards.
- Commercial equipment tends to last longer than domestic.

Ventilation

- Vans and stalls used for cooking tend to get hot, so you must have proper ventilation. This may mean some form of mechanical ventilation which vents externally. Vents discharging heat and fumes should be raised to at least 300mm above the roof and fitted with a cowl to prevent water getting in.
- Frying ranges should be ventilated directly through the ceiling or wall behind the appliance.
- Canopies above cookers should be stainless steel without open seams and fitted with dirt traps.

Washing facilities

- The limited facilities within a vehicle make adequate washing provision very important to prevent cross contamination. There must be separate washing facilities for equipment food and hands - a double sink unit is ideal.
- Have a direct supply of hot and cold water to both sinks - hot water should be around 80°C. A hot water 'boiler' may be acceptable but make sure that hot water does not spill from the boiler when the van is moving.
- Soap and hand drying facilities - disposable towels - must be provided.



Water Supply

- Have an adequate supply of water to ensure that ongoing cleaning takes place and foodstuffs and equipment are not contaminated.
- At least five gallons of cold water and three gallons of hot water should be available - always consider where additional supplies can be obtained.
- Water storage containers should be thoroughly rinsed before filling and must be cleaned and sanitised on a regular basis.

Waste and Pests

- Lidded bins and disposable liners should be used - food pedal bins are the best and should be emptied regularly to discourage flies.
- Place a bin outside the vehicle for customer litter.
- Waste water should be discharged into a foul water system or into suitable containers and not directly onto the ground - waste water can contain small particles of food debris which can attract vermin to a site.
- Waste water containers should be clearly marked to prevent mix up with clean units.
- Grease deposits on walls and ceilings will attract flies inside the vehicle - the cleaner the van the less problems with flying insects.
- The design and construction of the premises must prevent access for pests during storage - any infestation must be dealt with immediately.
- Food Safety Officers have powers to close any premises where a pest infestation poses an imminent risk to health.



Food Safety Management System

Food hygiene regulations require that you must be able to show what you do to make food that is safe to eat - and have this written down. This is known as a documented food safety management system. It identifies:

- food safety hazards
- process steps which are critical for food safety
- food safety controls that need to be in place, maintained, monitored and reviewed
- that staff have been correctly trained.

To help small catering businesses the Food Standards Agency has produced a documented system called Safer Food Better Business (SFBB) which guides food business operators through complying with this requirement. A SFBB pack can be downloaded from **food.gov.uk**. A pack covers the four main food safety control areas:

Chilling

Effective temperature control and storage is one of the most important safeguards for controlling the growth of food poisoning organisms.

Consider the following points:

- vehicles used for transporting or storing high risk food should contain refrigeration of some kind
- high risk products such as cooked meat and dairy products, must be stored at or below 8°C
- refrigerated equipment should be regularly checked with a temperature thermometer - temperatures should be recorded in the SFBB pack
- ready to eat food such as sandwiches can be kept for a single maximum period of up to four hours outside temperature control
- there should be sufficient fridge space for all high risk foods used as back up provisions
- food must be stored off the ground and kept away from contamination
- outer dirty packaging should be discarded as soon as possible
- cool boxes with freezer blocks could be used.



Cooking

- Cooked food should reach a core temperature of 75°C - use a probe thermometer to check the temperature and disinfect before and after use.
- Ideally food should be prepared immediately before service but if this is not possible prepare in small batches and keep hot.
- Hot food displayed for sale and service should be kept above 63°C.
- Cooked food kept hot for long periods of time should be discarded at the end of the day.

Cross-contamination

One of the main risks facing mobile catering is to protect food from contamination. Due to the limited facilities and space in mobile vehicles it is essential that food preparation areas are cleaned and disinfected throughout the day.

- Raw and cooked food should be kept separate at all times - raw food should always be stored below cooked food and ideally separate refrigerators should be used.
- Keep food covered when stored in the fridge.
- Have a system to prevent cross contamination during cooking - use separate tongs for raw and cooked foods or different areas on the griddle pan.
- Where possible tongs or serviettes should be used for handling food especially when also handling money.
- Clean sinks after washing and preparing vegetables and raw food.
- All equipment including knives, chopping boards and containers should be cleaned and disinfected after use.
- Disinfect all cloths regularly and replace as soon as they become worn or damaged - the use of disposable cloths and paper towels is recommended.
- Packaging such as food bags and cups must be clean and stored in a protected area

Cleaning

- Adequate supplies of suitable food grade disinfectants or sanitising agents should be used for regular cleaning - hot water and washing up liquid is not a disinfectant and does not kill bacteria.
- Disinfect equipment and work surfaces frequently during trading.
- Hazardous substances such as cleaning materials must be used and stored in a safe manner.
- Due to the type of food cooked large amounts of grease can form on walls and equipment - have a good cleaning degreaser to clean regularly.



Personal Hygiene

- Clean and washable protective over clothing and headwear must be worn by food handlers. Outdoor clothing should be stored away from the food area.
- Clean waterproof dressings must be used to completely cover any cuts and abrasions on hands and forearms - blue plasters which are clearly visible are best.
- Anyone suffering from food poisoning, diarrhoea, vomiting, skin infections or wounds must not work in any food handling area.
- Smoking should not be allowed near open food.
- Jewellery and nail varnish should not be worn.
- Everyone should wash hands regularly and keep themselves and their protective over clothing - aprons - clean before starting work, after handling any raw foods, using the toilet, taking a break, sneezing or coughing.

Training

- It is a legal requirement that all food handlers undergo training in food hygiene matters - the level of training may vary but must be suitable for the food handling activities undertaken.
- It is recommended that any person who handles, prepares or cooks high risk food has a Level 2 Certificate in Food Hygiene.

Health and Safety Hazards

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)

- Once mixed with air in small concentrations LPG can become highly flammable and explosive and if there is a leak in a confined space there may be risk of asphyxiation. The cooking area needs to be well ventilated at high and low levels to ensure there is sufficient air to guarantee good combustion and the products of combustion or leaks of LPG are dispersed. Flame failure devices must be fitted to most LPG appliances which turn the gas off if the flame is extinguished.
- LPG cylinders should be stored in a suitable well-ventilated storage compartment outside the vehicle. This should be made of inflammable materials and be lockable to prevent tampering.
- Pipework and fittings should be well maintained and replaced when showing signs of wear. Flexible hoses must be checked for wear, be to BS 3212, be dated marked and replaced on a regular basis.
- LPG appliances need regular servicing by a gas engineer.
- The gas system must be inspected by a competent Gas Safe engineer trained to a level to inspect commercial mobile catering units (CMC). The gas inspection certificate should be available for inspection by an authorised officer. The system must be inspected at least annually but ideally every six months. Check if the engineer is suitably qualified at gassaferegister.co.uk
- A means of isolating the gas supply in the vehicle should be provided.
- Anyone working with any LPG gas appliance or changing LPG cylinders should be properly trained in the hazards involved.

Electrical Safety

- The electrical system - either 12 volt or 240 volt - must be properly maintained by a qualified electrician.
- There is a risk of fire or electric shock due to:
 - inadequate earthing
 - inadequate protection of conductors
 - inadequate maintenance
 - improper use of generators.

- If a 240 volt supply is used:
 - the supply must be protected by a 30mA residual current device (RCD)
 - all exposed metal parts - worktops or walls of the vehicles - must be bonded and earthed
 - the supply cables should be insulated, protected and supported to prevent physical damage
 - take great care with portable generators.

Fire Safety

- Fires can be caused by electrical faults, LPG, burning fat and grease.
- Provide suitable fire extinguishers - CO2 for electrical fires, dry powder for LPG and foam or fire blanket for chip pan fires.
- Do not light equipment until vehicle is stationary.
- Ensure the vehicle is well ventilated - excluding openable doors/windows.
- Provide extraction canopies over fryers.



**This information is available in
alternative formats and languages**



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