

Home Kitchen Basics

The kitchen is the busiest room in the house. Add in a home-based food business, and things really get cooking. So, when using your home kitchen to prepare food for sale, make food safety a top priority. Knowing what dangers to look for and being diligent about safe practices can greatly reduce the risk of serious illness and protect your business.

KNOW THE HAZARDS: There are four types of food safety hazards. Understanding them can help you pinpoint changes you can make to your workspace or processes.



BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Bacteria, viruses, yeasts, molds, parasites—all those microorganisms we can't see, taste, or smell can cause disease and be life-threatening. (Salmonella and norovirus fall into this category.) Contamination comes from various sources including fecal matter, soil and water, and food handlers' poor hygiene.



CHEMICAL HAZARDS

Harmful chemical substances can be naturally present in food, or intentionally or unintentionally added. For example, improperly storing or using cleaning agents or pesticides could cause food to be contaminated while it's being handled and prepared.



PHYSICAL HAZARDS

Foreign objects that make their way into food products are physical hazards. These could be pits from fruit, metal flakes from opening cans, glass from a broken light bulb, or even jewelry. To reduce the risk of a consumer chipping a tooth (or worse), carefully examine canned products and fruit before using. Also, make sure your kitchen equipment is in good condition, with no loose parts.



FOOD ALLERGENS

Food allergies occur when a person's immune system has an abnormal reaction to certain proteins in food. An allergic reaction can be mild, such as hives and swollen lips, or life-threatening. Common allergens that cause reactions are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, sesame, and soybeans. Whenever you're working with food, consider ways to manage allergens.

Food safety is the thoughtful approach to the methods for handling, preparing, and storing food in ways that help prevent foodborne illness.

Regulations about permissible foods, home kitchen requirements, and needed training vary by state. Check with local health regulatory authorities or your Extension office for information.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Home kitchens can get hectic when daily activities and business share space. Take steps to ensure things run smoothly and safely—for you, your family, and your business.

■ USE SPACE AND TIME WISELY

- Most kitchens have limited space, so they need to be highly organized. Remove items and food you aren't immediately using to free up space.
- Keep raw food and ingredients separated from ready-to-eat foods.
- Plan your family meal preparation and your business production at different times to reduce the chances of cross-contamination and cross-contact of foods containing allergens.
- Start with low-risk activities such as baking, and then move on to higher-risk activities such as preparing meats and fresh produce.

■ MANAGE FAMILY DYNAMICS

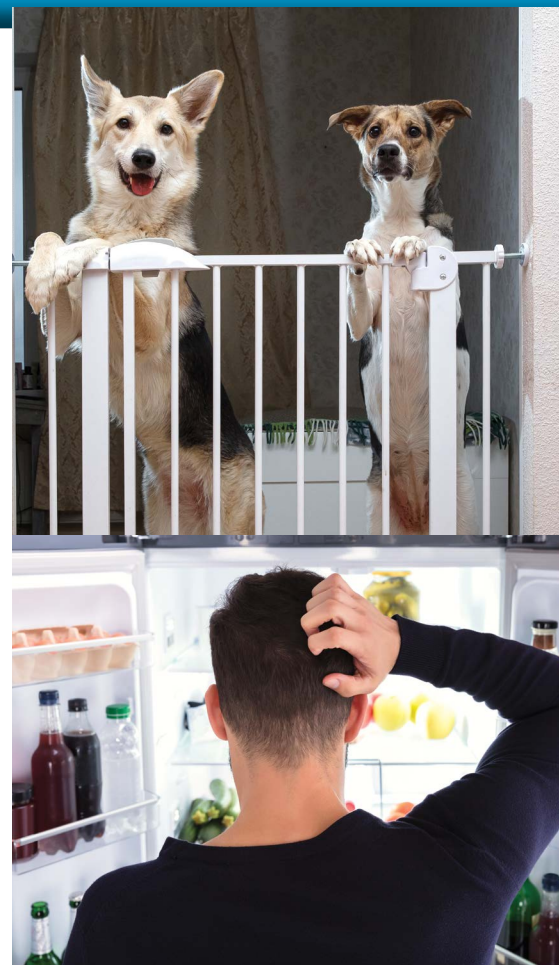
- Keep pets away from food preparation areas, including countertops and tables.
- Explain to family members, especially children, why food safety practices are important. They can help you maintain a clean environment.
- Keep nonfood items such as purses and keys off countertops and tables. They can be a source of contamination because they may have been on floors, the ground and other unclean surfaces.

■ DESIGN PROCESSES WITH FOOD SAFETY IN MIND

- Include reminder notes in your recipes of critical food safety steps, such as washing hands after handling raw eggs.
- Plan ahead to minimize interruptions so you won't have to leave the kitchen after you start preparing food.
- Wear a clean apron to minimize cross-contamination from touching your clothes.
- Avoid wearing jewelry with beads or jewels that could fall into the food and injure someone who eats it.
- Cover your hair/beard to minimize the chances of stray hairs contaminating food products.
- Avoid touching your face and clothes when handling ready-to-eat food items.
- Keep your fingernails short and unpolished. If you can't, wear disposable gloves to prevent chipped polish or acrylic nails from getting into the food.

■ BE SAFE, NOT SORRY

- Refrain from making food to sell when you or someone in your home has a suspected or confirmed case of foodborne illness. Illnesses caused by microorganisms such as norovirus and hepatitis A are highly contagious. Symptoms include diarrhea, fever, jaundice (yellowing of the eyes), and vomiting.



RESOURCES

4 Steps to Food Safety

www.foodsafety.gov

Food Safety Best Practices for Local Food Entrepreneurs

www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications

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