

Starting a food business from home

Guidance on how to get compliant and protect your customers when starting a food business from home.

This guidance is for individuals starting food businesses from home. Read in conjunction with our [food hygiene](#) and [food safety](#) guidance, following these steps will ensure hygiene standards are met, and your customers are protected.

For individuals starting a food business from home, or changing their business model, it is important to understand the food safety risks involved. This guidance includes the steps you need to take to address these risks, and how to provide food safely to your customers.



Register as a food business

When you start a new food business, or take over an existing business, you will need to [register with your local authority](#).

You should do this at least 28 days before opening. Registration of your food business is free and can't be refused. Registration is simple and will take a matter of minutes. If you are already trading and have not registered, you need to do so as soon as possible.

Food law requires the registration of activities where food is supplied on a regular and organised basis. This is required whether food is given away free or sold. While you may not define yourself as a business, if you are providing food on a regular and organised basis, you are a food business under food law.

These examples of [scenarios where registration may be required](#) can help you to understand whether your food activities require registration. Your local authority will be able to further assist

you in assessing whether you need to register.

Local authority officers will make arrangements to visit your home once registered to conduct a food hygiene inspection. This inspection is to assess whether your [food preparation areas](#) and [food safety procedures](#) are suitable.

Practical start-up requirements

Register as self-employed

When you start a food business from home you need to [inform HMRC that you are self-employed](#). This is to alert them that you will pay tax through Self-Assessment. You need to register as self-employed when starting a food business, even if you are part-time or have another job.

You should register at GOV.UK to verify your account and confirm the specifics of your food business. Failure to register may result in a fine.

HMRC has further guidance on [working for yourself](#) and how to check if you should [set up as a limited company](#) instead.

Running a business from home

The government has guidance for [running a business from home](#). This includes advice on:

- getting permission from your mortgage provider or landlord
- getting permission from the local council
- insurance
- tax allowances
- business rates
- health and safety.

Risk assessment

When [setting up a food business](#), you should carry out a risk assessment. In line with [wider government advice](#), an additional risk assessment is required to address the risks of COVID-19. The Health and Safety Executive has issued guidance on [how to carry out a risk assessment](#) and what to include.

Food businesses must use [HACCP procedures](#) or a HACCP-based Food Safety Management System. You may find our [Safer food, better business for caterers](#) pack (the [Safe catering](#) pack in Northern Ireland) useful to understand and address food safety and hygiene risks.

The packs have been designed for small businesses and contain information on personal hygiene, pest control, cross-contamination, cleaning, chilling and cooking, among other areas.

Food hygiene

Good food hygiene is essential to make sure that the food you serve is safe to eat. When you are setting up a food business, you need to introduce ways of working that will help you ensure hygiene standards are right from the start.

The four main areas to remember for good food hygiene are the 4Cs:

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

We have more information on how to manage [food hygiene in your business](#), including storing and transporting food, training and personal hygiene.

Food hygiene training

Wherever food is served, it is important to demonstrate the highest standards of food preparation, handling, storage and serving. You will need to demonstrate that you have been adequately trained in food hygiene.

It is not compulsory for you to have a food hygiene certificate, but if you are looking to start a food business, we recommend that you pursue a food hygiene qualification to improve your knowledge.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health provides guidance on the [different levels of food hygiene certificate available](#). Other accredited training providers are available. Your [local authority](#) will be able to advise on which course is most suitable for your needs.

Food hygiene rating

The [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme](#) gives businesses a rating out of 5 so that consumers can make informed choices about where to buy and eat food.

The local authority will inspect your food business and publish the rating on www.food.gov.uk/ratings

All businesses should be able to achieve the top rating of 5. If you do not, the food safety officer will outline the improvements that you need to make and will advise on how to achieve a higher rating.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme has variations between [England](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

Allergen management

Food businesses are required to provide allergen information and follow labelling rules as set out in food law.

This means that you must:

- provide allergen information to your customers
- handle and manage food allergens effectively in food preparation.

You need to tell customers if any food you provide contains any of the [14 allergens](#) that are required to be declared as allergens by food law. This also applies to any additives, or any other items present in the final product, such as garnishes or cake decorations.

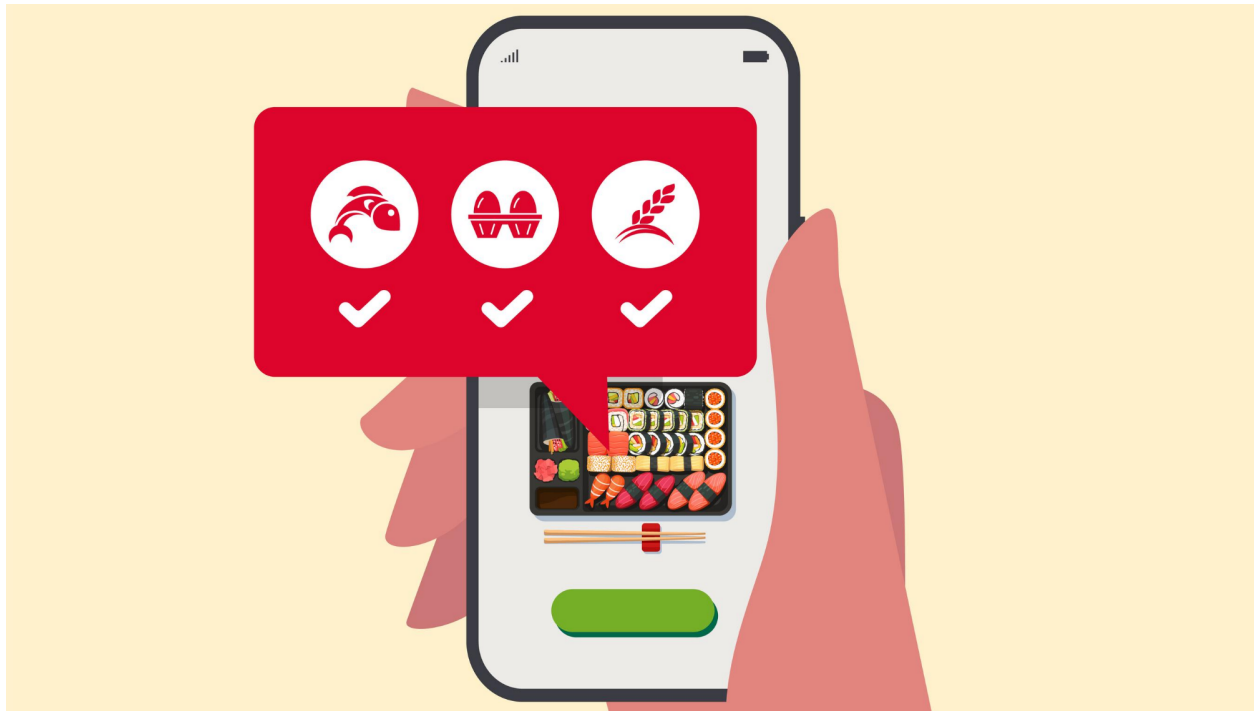
There are a number of ways in which allergen information can be provided to your customers. You will need to choose the method which is best for your business and the type of food you serve. Our [allergen guidance for food businesses](#) will help you to decide this.

You can take steps to provide allergen-safe meals by:

- cleaning utensils before each use
- regularly washing hands thoroughly
- storing ingredients and prepared foods separately
- labelling takeaway meals clearly.

It is important for food businesses to take steps to [avoid cross-contamination](#) in food preparation. This protects customers with a food allergy. We have further guidance available on [how to provide allergen information in food delivery](#).

We provide [free online food allergy training](#) which can be used to learn more about managing allergens in a kitchen, as well as how to cater for customers with food allergies.



Traceability

Traceability rules help keep track of food in the supply chain. They ensure that efficient and accurate [withdrawals and recalls](#) of unsafe foods from the market can be made in the event of any food safety problems.

You must keep records of:

- all the suppliers that provide you with food or any food ingredients
- the businesses you supply with food or food ingredients.

All your records need to be kept up-to-date and be available for inspections at all times.

Specific details of what you should include in your traceability records can be found in [managing food safety](#). Often this information will be included on the invoice.

Selling food online

If you are [selling food online](#), you should [register as a food business](#).

When you sell food over the internet, the food you sell is subject to UK food law. This covers: **safety, record keeping, [product withdrawal](#), [product recall](#), good hygiene and [labelling requirements](#)**.

You should have a statement on your website to advise customers where they can obtain allergen information before they place their order. If you provide food via an external online ordering website, they may have their own requirements for providing allergen information to customers.

There are also rules you must follow when [importing and exporting food](#), and [storing or using personal information](#).

For businesses selling food online, we are aiming for mandatory online display of your rating in Northern Ireland in 2023. [Guidance is available to assist businesses](#) with displaying their rating online or on social media.

By putting your rating on display in your premises or online, you can show your customers how good your hygiene standards are.

Food delivery

If you are [delivering food orders](#), all food must be delivered to consumers in a way that ensures that it does not become unsafe or unfit to eat.

Food that needs refrigerating must be kept cool while being transported. This may need to be packed in an insulated box with a coolant gel or in a cool bag. Equally, food that needs to be kept hot should be packed in an insulated bag.

If you use a domestic vehicle (or a non-food industry business vehicle) to transport your food orders, we have information about the [hygiene requirements and vehicle specifications](#) that should be met.

You must provide allergen information:

- before the purchase of the food is completed - this can be in writing (on your website)
- when the food is delivered - this can be in writing (allergen stickers on food or an enclosed copy of a menu) or orally (by delivery driver).

We have further guidance available on [how to provide allergen information and avoid cross-contamination in food delivery](#).

Food-grade packaging

If you deliver food orders, it is important to select appropriate food-grade packaging. This is packaging designed for the intended use, such as the transport of hot food. This will make sure that the transported food is safe and its quality is maintained.

For example, packaging materials may be required to be liquid or fat repellent to prevent leaks, or to stop paper becoming soaked through. Without this type of packaging, chemical contaminants or germs could transfer onto the food. Well-fitting lids or closures will also minimise any hygiene or spillage risks.



Avoiding food crime

When sourcing ingredients, only purchase food from reputable suppliers. Ensure that you are fully aware of where the food has come from.

The disruptive effect of COVID-19 has introduced risks of misrepresentation and illicit supply practices to meet demand. Be vigilant when approached by businesses you have not previously had dealings with. Determine where the food has originated from before purchasing anything.

Check whether the price is in line with the current market price. Prices of products fluctuate, but be wary if suppliers are offering products at a lower price than usual.

You can [report suspected food crime](#) to the National Food Crime Unit. You can also report a business behaving unfairly, or profiteering, during COVID-19 to the [Competition and Markets Authority](#).