National Delivered Meals
Food Safety Project

Looking After Delivered Meals

A 30-minute video and handbook package developed with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.
National Delivered Meals Food Safety Project
Looking After Delivered Meals

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How to Use this Package

Everyone working with food has a personal responsibility to handle food safely. This video and handbook information package has been designed to help people involved with delivered meal organisations to understand their legal responsibilities.

The video is set in real kitchens and follows the food from delivery to sale. Practices shown apply to all delivered meal organisations whether large or small, new or old.

The handbook details a range of food safety issues that are of particular interest to delivered meal organisations.

Relevant national Food Safety Standards are quoted in the margin for reference and advice on how to comply with them is contained in the text. The handbook also contains example charts and information sheets suitable for photocopying as required.

Training for skills and knowledge needs to be completed in addition to viewing this video and handbook (see page 3 for more information about training).

The feature boxes contain suggestions that may help a kitchen supervisor monitor food safety practices and could form part of a food safety program.

Ideally, the proprietor and kitchen supervisor should watch the video and read the handbook so they can decide on the most suitable way for the information to be shared. For example, they may choose to:

• Arrange a social event at the start of each quarter for staff and volunteers to meet and use the video to trigger a discussion about food safety
• Loan the package to individuals to watch the video and read the handbook at home, before commencing work in the kitchen.

Choose the method that will work best in your kitchen.
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Background

In October 1999, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, formerly known as the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA), recommended four national Food Safety Standards to Health Ministers, meeting as the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council (ANZFSC). The following three standards were adopted on 24th August 2000 and have been enacted by each State and Territory Government:

- Standard 3.1.1 (Interpretation and Application)
- Standard 3.2.2 (Food Safety Practices and General Requirements)
- Standard 3.2.3 (Food Premises and Equipment).

The fourth Standard, Standard 3.2.1 Food Safety Programs, was gazetted in November 2000 as a model standard that could be adopted voluntarily by State and Territory Governments. In December 2003, Health Ministers, meeting as the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council, agreed that four identified high risk sectors should implement mandatory food safety programs. One of the identified high risk areas was food service to vulnerable populations, which includes Delivered Meals Organisations. At the time of printing, Food Standards Australia New Zealand is drafting amendments to the Food Standards Code within the policy framework set by Ministerial Council.

This package focuses on the provisions of the first three standards that are already law around Australia.
Introduction

Delivered meal organisations provide food to one of the most vulnerable groups in the community - the old or incapacitated who are unable to prepare their own meals. Without access to a regular balanced diet, clients may experience more sickness, loss of bone strength and decreased quality of life.

Delivered meal organisations can be found in the biggest cities to the smallest country towns. They may be operated in different ways. For example they may:
- Have kitchens operated by full time paid employees
- Have a paid convener with volunteers
- Rely totally on the help of volunteers
- Contract out the food preparation to the local hospital, hotel or other commercial provider.

However, regardless of their size or location, delivered meal organisations all have one thing in common - they have a duty of care to ensure only safe food is delivered to clients.

National food laws, called the Food Safety Standards, have been introduced that apply throughout Australia. They provide the minimum requirements to handle food safely. The Standards identify the responsibilities of the proprietor of the food business and food handlers. For a delivered meal organisation the proprietor may be the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation, the meals co-ordinator or the kitchen supervisor - so you will need to be quite clear who is ultimately responsible for the kitchen. (See 'Interpretation' in margin for definition of proprietor).

The Standards apply equally to volunteers and paid kitchen workers. After all, every person who handles food needs to handle it carefully - regardless of whether they are paid.

Looking After Delivered Meals is a video and handbook resource designed to help delivered meal organisations comply with the national Food Safety Standards. By following the practices shown in the video and handbook, everyone involved with preparing or delivering the meals will be able to demonstrate that they handle food safely.

Standard 3.1.1

4 Compliance
(1) The proprietor of a food business must ensure the food business complies with all the requirements of the Food Safety Standards.

1 Interpretation
Proprietor of a food business means:
a) the person carrying on the food business, or
b) if that person cannot be identified - the person in charge of the food business.

Food handler means a person who directly engages in the handling of food, or who handles surfaces likely to come into contact with food, for a food business.

Looking After Delivered Meals
Why do we need the Standards?

You only have to read the newspapers or speak to your friends to know that things can and do go wrong with food. Most people at some stage have suffered from food poisoning symptoms including nausea, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pains, sweats and headaches – all very unpleasant.

Old and sick people are more vulnerable to food poisoning and most other diseases. As their immune systems may not be working properly, their symptoms may be more serious and they may take longer to recover. So, when we make food for them we need to be extra careful to make sure we prepare it safely.

Notification

The national Food Safety Standards apply to all food sold in Australia. This includes food that is raffled or sold to raise funds for a charity or community group. Delivered meal organisations are regarded as food businesses. The government monitors food businesses to make sure they comply with food laws. To help them do this, the national Food Safety Standards require businesses to advise the government that they sell food.

The local government in your area needs to know where all food premises are located. This information is used to:
- Identify food businesses and types of food produced
- Plan inspection frequencies to make sure that businesses are complying with legislation
- Follow up on foodborne disease or food recalls.

The information required provides contact details for the food business, including:
- Name of food business
- Name and business address of proprietor
- Nature of food business
- Location of all food premises of the food business (e.g. if food is transported from a central kitchen and served at satellite centres).

The business must inform the local government of any changes to the information provided, before they occur.
In some States and Territories the business may need to be registered. Registration provides the opportunity for government to put conditions on the operation of the business where they may be necessary to protect public health. In addition, a government may charge a fee to register a food business. If registration applies in your State or Territory, extra information may be required but your local environmental health officer will be able to advise you about this.

Skills and knowledge

Everyone working in the kitchen must have the skills and knowledge to handle food safely. This does not mean that everyone has to have qualifications in food safety - but just that they have the knowledge to understand what can go wrong with food and the skills to prevent it.

For example, food poisoning is caused when something gets into food that shouldn’t be there. When this happens, we say the food has been contaminated.

What is contamination?

There are three main types of contamination:

- **Physical contamination** includes things like insects, dirt, hair, and bits of metal, glass or plastic getting into food.

- **Chemical contamination** happens when chemicals such as insect sprays, paints, detergents, sanitisers or excessive food additives get into food.

- **Microbiological contamination** occurs when bacteria or viruses get into food. Microbes cause most food poisonings.

Some plants and fungi are dangerous as they contain natural chemicals that are poisonous e.g. toadstools.
Microbes are everywhere, on vegetables, raw meat, clothing and our hands. Not all microbes make us sick. Some are used to make yoghurt and wines but others can put us in hospital!

If we eat food that contains a lot of food poisoning microbes, we may get sick. Some people can eat quite a lot of microbes and not get ill. However, very old or very young people can get sick by eating only a small number of food poisoning microbes.

If food is not handled properly it may be contaminated by:
• A large number of viruses or bacteria all at once, (for example, if someone sneezes on a salad) or
• A small number of bacteria that, under the right conditions, multiply quickly to numbers that cause food poisoning.

Bacteria that cause food poisoning may multiply quickly on potentially hazardous foods. These are high-risk foods for

**Examples of Potentially Hazardous Foods**

*If you handle any of these foods, you need to know how to handle them safely.*

- **Processed fruits and vegetables** such as prepared salads and ready-to-use vegetable packs.
- **Dairy products** and foods containing them such as milk, cream, custard dairy based desserts.
- **Seafood** and food containing it such as cooked prawns and crab but not live seafood.
- **Processed foods** containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein-rich food.
- **Raw meats, cooked meats** and food containing them such as casseroles, curries, lasagna and meat pies.
- **Cooked rice and pasta.**
- **Other foods** that contain the above foods such as quiche and sandwiches.
Looking After Delivered Meals

Food poisoning as they support the growth of bacteria. They generally contain protein and moisture.

Some types of bacteria may double in number every twenty minutes on potentially hazardous food kept between 5°C and 60°C. This range is known as the temperature danger zone.

The Temperature Danger Zone

Keep hot food at or above 60°C
DANGER ZONE
Keep cold food at or below 5°C
Keep frozen food frozen

Food poisoning bacteria are unable to multiply rapidly outside the temperature danger zone.

Now we know what contamination is, and the importance of keeping potentially hazardous food out of the temperature danger zone, we need to make sure that all food handlers use this knowledge to keep food safe.
How do you protect food from contamination?

To protect food from physical contamination you should:
- Wear clean protective clothing e.g. apron, hat, etc.
- Wash your hands
- Keep insects and animals out of the kitchen and
- Keep food covered.

To protect food from chemical contamination you should:
- Store chemicals away from food
- Use insecticides carefully e.g. do not spray over food or work benches and wash hands after placing cockroach baits
- Use cleaning chemicals carefully e.g. follow instructions on the label, use the right chemicals for the job and do not use them near food.

To protect potentially hazardous food from microbiological contamination you should:
- Stop bacteria and viruses getting into food by
  - Keeping food covered
  - Washing hands before touching food
  - Using clean, dry utensils
  - Storing ready-to-eat food above raw meats and vegetables so bacteria in meat juices and soil don’t fall onto other foods
  - **Not working if you have diarrhoea or vomiting e.g. food poisoning**

Remember, to stop bacteria multiplying on potentially hazardous food keep it cold (at or below 5°C) or keep it hot (at or above 60°C).

What other information do food handlers need to know?

The kitchen supervisor will need to check that food handlers are confident and competent to undertake all tasks required of them.

A ‘train as you go’ approach can work very well. This means that you show food handlers what to do and supervise them until they are comfortable doing the task.
Getting skills and knowledge

If your kitchen prepares potentially hazardous foods you need to understand the dangers associated with handling these foods and have the skills to handle them safely. For example, you prepare potentially hazardous foods if you:

- Cook raw meats e.g. chickens, roasts, rissoles, stews
- Prepare soups from fresh ingredients e.g. chicken
- Make sandwiches with potentially hazardous fillings, e.g. ham, chicken, other cold meats, egg, fish
- Heat foods e.g. pies, chicken strips, fish.

The following table identifies the skills and knowledge that may be required to safely carry out activities in the kitchen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work activity</th>
<th>Skills and knowledge required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handle potentially hazardous food:</td>
<td>Understand what bacteria need to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Storing</td>
<td>Temperature control</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Preparing</td>
<td>Contamination</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cooking</td>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
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<td>- Cooling</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Reheating</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Serving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handle non-potentially hazardous food only e.g. bread</td>
<td>Contamination</td>
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<tr>
<td>only e.g. bread (not filled), confectionery (including</td>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
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<td>ice cream), wrapped food that does not need to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>refrigerated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serve food only</td>
<td>Contamination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean kitchen only</td>
<td>Contamination</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handling chemicals</td>
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Photo 9: Understand the dangers of handling potentially hazardous food.
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While the Standards do not require food handlers to have formal training, the kitchen supervisor may benefit from attending an accredited food hygiene training course, for example at a local college. The kitchen supervisor could consolidate her/his knowledge about food safety and learn how to pass on information to other food handlers.

However, if there is no suitable course to attend, the kitchen supervisor may be able to undertake in-house training using books and videos or on-line training.

The kitchen supervisor will need to check that food handlers are confident and competent to undertake the tasks required of them. Show food handlers what to do and supervise them until they are comfortable doing the task. Don’t assume that food handlers will know what to do. Check first!

Many kitchens have regular induction sessions for new staff and volunteers, (see page iv). Include this package in your information sessions so everyone knows what the law requires of them.

Food safety relies on everyone handling food with care.

Food handling controls

The national Food Safety Standards have been written in a practical way and follow the food from when it is received to when it is sold. These Standards detail how to handle food during:

- Food receipt
- Food storage
- Food processing
- Food display
- Food labelling and packaging
- Food transportation

They also include information about food disposal and recall.

Let’s look at these food handling controls in more detail.

Standard 3.2.2

3 Food handling - skills and knowledge

(1) A food business must ensure that persons undertaking or supervising food handling operations have:

(a) skills in food safety and food hygiene matters and

(b) knowledge of food safety and food hygiene matters, commensurate with their work activities.
Food receipt

Garbage in, garbage out, is a well-used expression in the computer industry - but it can also apply to food businesses.

If you accept sub-standard product into the kitchen, no matter what you do, it will be sub-standard when you sell it. Save yourself a lot of hassle and only accept food that is within its date coding and in good condition.

From a practical point of view this means that you should arrange for someone to receive deliveries and, where possible, check them as soon as they arrive. You should reject the following:

**Date Marking**

Generally, food must be date marked and stored under the conditions shown on the label. *No date marking* is required on food with a shelf life of longer than two years.

**Use By Date**

The date by which the food should be eaten and still be safe.

![Use By Date Example](image1)

Food may not be sold beyond its use by date, as it may not be safe to eat.

**Best Before Date**

The date the manufacturer recommends that the food be eaten by, to be in best quality condition.

![Best Before Date Example](image2)

A food may be sold beyond its best before date provided it has not deteriorated and is still safe to eat.

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10

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Standard 3.2.2

5 Food receipt

(1) A food business must take all practicable measures to ensure it only accepts food that is protected from the likelihood of contamination.

Reject

Damaged food and food in damaged packages

Holes and tears in packages
If a package has a hole in it you do not know what caused it or what may have entered the package. The hole may be due to gnawing by rodents or other animals, boring by insects or tearing by machinery or rough handling. Chemicals, bacteria or insects may have contaminated the food through the hole - so don’t take a chance - don’t accept it!

Dented, rusted or blown cans
If cans are damaged you cannot see if tiny holes have been formed in the cans. When a hole has been made, the can may suck up dirt and bacteria. Cans which are bulging (‘blown’) may contain gas from decomposing food.

Dirty or contaminated packaging
Packages that are dirty will contaminate shelves, and other foods stored near them. Also when you open the package, dirt will contaminate your hands and other foods.

Check the smell of packaging. If it smells of animal urine or chemicals, the product inside may also smell. Some foods e.g. fats and eggs absorb smells easily, so if they are stored near solvents they may smell and taste unpleasant.

Reject

Reject food without an Australian or NZ address

All prepackaged foods should be labelled with a food name e.g. ‘sausage roll’ or ‘meat pie’ and have an Australian or New Zealand address on the label (or in associated paperwork e.g. invoice).

This information is important in case there is a recall of the food - you will not be able to identify the food without the name and you would not be able to complain about the food or return it if there is no address.

You may need to transfer some information from the outer boxes of catering packs e.g. best before dates or lot numbers, to any containers you store the food in.
Looking After Delivered Meals

You may wish to keep a record of rejected deliveries, so you can identify suppliers that regularly send you sub-standard food.

Photocopy and enlarge the Rejected Deliveries chart on page 12 as required. Use it to identify suppliers that regularly deliver sub-standard food. If deliveries don’t improve, consider changing your supplier.

Reject potentially hazardous food out of temperature control

Potentially hazardous food should only be accepted if it is:
• Frozen solid or
• At or below 5°C or
• At or above 60°C.

Reject potentially hazardous food delivered in the temperature danger zone, unless your supplier can demonstrate the food will be safe. (See page 30 for more information).

For example, if you receive warm pies direct from the bakery you need to make sure they are not going to be in the temperature danger zone for longer than four hours. They may be received warm on the day of baking and put immediately in the fridge or pre-heated pie warmer.

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Standard 3.2.2

5 Food receipt

(3) A food business must, when receiving potentially hazardous food, take all practicable measures to ensure it only accepts potentially hazardous food that is at a temperature of:
(a) 5°C or below; or
(b) 60°C or above,
unless the food business transporting the food demonstrates that the temperature of the food, having regard to the time taken to transport the food, will not adversely affect the microbiological safety of the food.

(4) A food business must, when receiving potentially hazardous food, take all practicable measures to ensure that food which is intended to be received frozen, is frozen when it is accepted.
**REJECTED DELIVERIES**

Only accept food in good condition. Check that:
- Frozen food is hard
- Potentially hazardous foods are at or below 5°C or at or above 60°C
- Food is within use by date or best before date
- Label or documentation has an Australian or NZ contact address
- Packaging is not damaged.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Problem and action taken</th>
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*Looking After Delivered Meals*
Have you told your suppliers how you want to receive your food?

It makes sense to let your suppliers know that you expect food delivered to comply with the National Food Safety Standards. All suppliers should be aware of what the Standards require. Use the following example Suppliers’ Letter to help you design your own.

Dear Sir or Madam

**Food deliveries to (insert name of business)**

(Insert name of business) is committed to providing safe food and complying with food safety legislation. Therefore, our kitchen will only accept food that complies with Standard 3.2.2 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

Please be advised that if your product fails to meet the specifications outlined below it may not be accepted when delivered.

- **All foods**: To be within use by or best before date. Australian or NZ address of vendor, manufacturer, importer or packer to be on label or in associated documentation.

- **Dry goods**: Packages to be intact and clean. No dented, rusted or blown cans will be accepted.

- **Cold potentially hazardous foods**: e.g. cooked and raw meats, dairy foods, ham, fish, seafood, prepared salads etc. must be received at or below 5°C.

- **Hot potentially hazardous foods**: e.g. hot pies must be received at or above 60°C.

If foods are delivered outside these temperatures, supporting evidence will be required to demonstrate that the products are safe to eat. This is in accordance with clause 5 of Standard 3.2.2, which states:

(3) A food business must, when receiving potentially hazardous food, take all practicable measures to ensure it only accepts potentially hazardous food that is at a temperature of:

(a) 5°C or below; or

(b) 60°C or above,

unless the food business transporting the food demonstrates that the temperature of the food, having regard to the time taken to transport the food, will not adversely affect the microbiological safety of the food.

If you require further information about the national Food Safety Standards please visit the Food Standards Australia New Zealand web site at [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au).

This organisation takes food safety very seriously and appreciates your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

*Looking After Delivered Meals*
Looking After Delivered Meals

Food storage

Now the food has been delivered, what do you do with it? You need to store food so it can’t be contaminated. Look at the food and ask yourself – can objects, chemicals or bacteria get onto this food? If the answer is yes, then you need to do something to stop food contamination. For example, you could:

- Cover food to prevent foreign objects and chemical sprays contaminating it,
- Store raw meats below other foods to prevent blood dripping onto them and
- Wear a hat or tie hair back so it cannot fall into food.

Check the date marking and always rotate your stock - new stock to the back, old stock to the front. Some foods need special storage conditions. For example, potatoes need to be stored in a dark place to stop them going green and chocolate needs to be stored below 34°C to prevent it from melting.

Most packages contain storage instructions, for example, frozen food temperatures and others such as ‘refrigerate after opening’. Make sure you follow them so the food will be kept at its best.

However, to prevent any bacteria in potentially hazardous food from multiplying, it is very important that this food is stored correctly in the cool-room or fridge.

Storing food in the cool-room or fridge

To protect food from contamination - keep it covered. Where possible, use separate fridges/cool-rooms for raw foods and ‘ready-to-eat’ foods.

Raw foods e.g. raw meats, raw unwashed fruits and vegetables need to be on the bottom shelves and ‘ready-to-eat foods’ on the top (See page 16). This is because raw foods can drop dirt or drip juices onto other foods. The cleaner the food, the higher the shelf!

In many fridges the fruit and vegetable crispers are located on the bottom shelf. Any raw meat stored on the shelf above could contaminate fruits and vegetables in

Photo 15: Follow the storage conditions on the label.

Photo 16: Keep food covered to protect it from contamination.
the crispers below. Therefore, make sure that any raw
meat is placed in a container to collect drips and is
wrapped. Make sure that eggs are stored so they cannot
contaminate other foods.

Be careful not to overload the cool-room or fridge. They
keep food cold by moving cold air around every package.
If the food is jam-packed there will be no space for the
air to move around the food. The food will not keep cool
enough to stop bacteria multiplying.

You may want to label each shelf so everyone knows
where food should be stored.

How well does your cool-room or fridge work? Does it keep
food at or below 5°C? Do you check the temperature?

An easy way to check the temperature is to keep a container
of water in the cool-room or fridge and take the temperature
of the water. Move the container to a different place every
couple of days to find out where the warmest spot is and
then keep the container there. If the water is below 5°C in
the warmest spot, you know that all food in the cool-room or
fridge should be cold enough.

If you write down the temperature of the water in the
container at least once a day when you start work, you can
see over time if the temperature is slowly going up. Use
the example Temperature Monitoring chart on page 18 to
develop your own chart.

If the temperature is rising, just check the cool-room or fridge
for the following:
  • Is it overloaded?
  • Are the door seals damaged letting cold air escape?
  • Does the thermostat need adjusting for the season?

Frozen food

The Standards require frozen food to be kept frozen
during storage. The easiest way to check if food is frozen
is to tap or feel it. If it is hard, then it is frozen.

Some foods will show condensation on the outside of the
packages when they are starting to melt. Ice cream does
Looking After Delivered Meals

How to Store Food Safely in the Cool-room or Fridge

If you have more than one fridge or cool-room - use one for ready-to-eat foods, another for raw meats, etc.

- **Top shelf**
  - Ready-to-eat food

- **Next shelf down**
  - Dairy foods

- **Next shelf down**
  - Raw vegetables

- **Bottom shelf**
  - Raw meats
Looking After Delivered Meals

this very quickly – so use ice cream as an indicator of how well the freezer is working.

You may choose to measure the temperature of your freezer by placing a thermometer between two packages of food. The temperature recordings will give you an idea as to how well the freezer is working.

It makes sense to record the temperatures of all fridges, cool-rooms and freezers to make sure they are working properly. Photocopy and enlarge the Temperature Monitoring chart on page 18 as required.

If, over a few days, the temperature is slowly rising you can arrange for the equipment to be serviced before it breaks down!

Food processing

The kitchen must only process food that is safe and suitable. What do these terms mean?

Safe food

Safe food is food that will not cause physical harm to a person eating it. However, this does not include people who may be allergic to a particular food.

Some kitchens may prepare food for clients with severe allergies. Before preparing food for these clients find out exactly what it is they are allergic to and how sensitive they are. It may be necessary to prepare the food for allergy sufferers before any other food is handled.

Suitable food

Suitable food is food that is in good condition and is not damaged, deteriorated, perished or contaminated. Examples of unsuitable food include food in broken packages, mouldy bread, rotting meat and food containing chemicals, objects or bacteria.

In summary, you cannot make a ‘safe and suitable’ meal from ‘off’ or sub-standard ingredients.
## TEMPERATURE MONITORING

Month ........................................

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Fridge 1 (Food at or below 5°C)</th>
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<th>Freezer 1 (Frozen food hard)</th>
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*Looking After Delivered Meals*