

Catering Foods

Food Safety Fact Sheet / February 2016

Catering is the business of providing food service at the location of a function which may be separate from where the food is prepared.

Errors in timing and temperature increase the risk for foodborne illness. The challenge is heightened when preparing and serving large volumes of food to many people.

People should be confident that all proper food handling practices are used throughout the process of handling, cooking, transporting, storing and serving food. One result of making these food handling practices a priority is the creation of an environment where there is less of an opportunity for foodborne illness to occur. In regard to social occasions where food is being served, every effort should be made to ensure that the event is enjoyable rather than a high risk for foodborne illness.

CHOOSING A CATERER

In Nova Scotia, any caterer involved in commercial food preparation must hold a Food Establishment Permit pursuant to the Nova Scotia Health Protection Act and Food Safety Regulations. Such permits are issued by NS Environment – Environmental Health and Food Safety Division. In addition, these caterers must have a recognized Food Safety Course which will enhance their knowledge of proper food preparation.

The location for serving food should have hand washing equipment, washrooms and hot and cold potable water.

The caterer should have proper food handling equipment including cutting boards, utensils, food thermometers, and hot and cold holding equipment for both transporting and serving foods.

Caterers should possess appropriate insurance and be willing to provide references.

CATERING FOOD Food Preparation

All foods including raw meats, fish and poultry must be purchased from an approved source.

Fresh foods should be purchased no more than one to two days before the event.

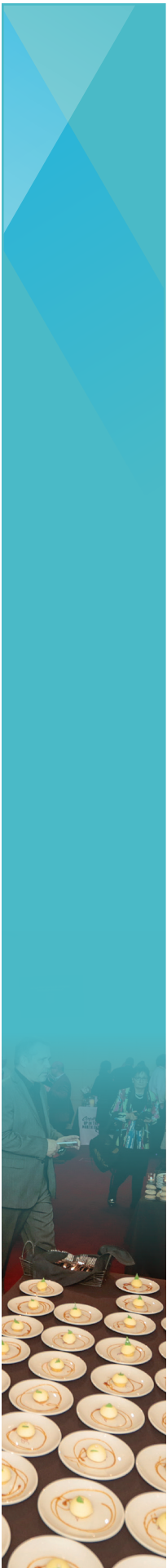
When planning the menu consider your guests list and avoid high risk foods such as raw fish or shellfish and unpasteurized cheeses, especially if you have young, aged or immune-suppressed persons on your list.

Hot foods should be cooked the same day as the event and served hot, reducing the risk associated with the cooling and reheating steps.

Meat, poultry, fish, and other high risk foods such as cream filled pastries and desserts must be refrigerated at 4°C / 40°F until ready for preparation or service.

Meat and poultry must be cooked to the correct internal temperature and kept hot (above 60°C / 140°F) until served.

Temperatures should be checked using a probe food thermometer.



Staffing

- The caterer should have sufficient staff to prepare and serve the meal in a reasonable time period.
- Staff should wear clean outer garments (uniforms) or aprons and hair coverings. Staff should not smoke, eat or drink while preparing or serving food.

Transporting Foods

- All food must be transported in sealed, leak-proof containers suitably designed for holding or transporting food.
- Hot foods must be transported at 60°C (140°F) or higher and cold foods transported at 4°C (40°F) or lower.
- Vehicles used to transport food must be clean and free from contamination.

Serving Large Quantities of Food

SERVING A SIT DOWN MEAL

- Hot foods should be plated immediately prior to serving. If there is to be a delay, the plates of food must be held at 60°C (140°F) or above.
- Hot holding equipment is intended only for maintaining food above 60°C (140°F) and must never be used to reheat cold foods.
- Cold plated foods must be kept at 4°C (40°F) or lower. Any perishable food left at room temperature for longer than two hours should be discarded.

BUFFET

- Hot foods are to be kept at or above 60°C (140°F) and cold foods kept at or below 4°C (40°F).
- Perishable foods not kept at hot or cold temperatures must be discarded after two hours.
- Replenish hot and cold foods as required rather than placing large volumes of food on the buffet line.

- Guests are to be encouraged to use a clean plate each time they return to the buffet table.
- Sauces and dressings should be labeled.
- Tongs or long-handled ladles must be provided for each buffet item to prevent guests from touching the food with their hands or utensils and to assist in the prevention of cross contact of allergens.
- Sneeze-guards or covering of food should be encouraged to help avoid contamination.

Leftover Foods

- Perishable foods that have been served or placed on a buffet should not be reused.
- Hot foods that have not been served or placed on a buffet should be cooled, and refrigerated within two hours. Hot foods may be cooled quickly by placing them in shallow pans with the food no deeper than two inches.
- Refrigerated leftovers should be eaten within four days or be frozen for longer storage. Dating leftovers helps to make sure they are used quickly.
- Frozen leftovers should be used within two to four months for best quality.
- Leftovers must be reheated to at least 74°C (165°F). The temperature should be checked using a probe thermometer.

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There are four simple rules for food safety that will help ensure an enjoyable celebration:

- **COOK**- cook to proper temperatures;
- **CHILL**- refrigerate foods promptly;
- **CLEAN**- wash hands, utensils and surfaces often to keep everything clean and free of bacteria;
- **SEPARATE**- keep foods separate to avoid cross contamination.