

FOOD SAFETY FOR TAKEAWAY CHICKEN SHOPS

Key issues

- Cook chicken properly to kill bacteria and viruses that may cause foodborne illness.
- Prevent recontamination of cooked foods and contamination of other ready-to-eat foods.
- Store food properly – either hot or cold – so bacteria will not grow.

How to meet the food safety requirements

Tactics	Requirements/Suggestions
Have a good work system for handling ready-to-eat foods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep raw food, scraps and used utensils separate from cooked food and meals.
Be extra careful when handling raw chicken to avoid contamination of ready-to-eat foods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use different colour-coded knives and cutting boards for raw and ready-to-eat foods. • Clean and sanitise the bench top after chicken preparation. • Wash hands thoroughly after handling raw chicken. • Store food covered – raw on the lower shelves and ready-to-eat food on the upper shelves of the refrigerator or cool room.
Use a thermometer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook chicken until the deep meat temperature reaches 74°C. • Display hot food at 60°C. • Cool food in small portions so it cools quickly – within two hours from 60°C to 21°C, and then within a further four hours from 21°C to 5°C. • Store cold food at 5°C or less.
Be diligent about staff personal hygiene.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid hand contact with food and don't cough or sneeze near food. • Don't allow staff with gastroenteritis to handle food. • Supply warm water, soap and paper towels at the hand basin.
Make sure food surfaces, equipment and utensils are cleaned and sanitised properly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visual check is essential but a simple and cheap test for residual protein is better.
Train and retrain staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure staff members have up-to-date food safety skills.



Contamination

The sources of bacteria that cause food poisoning in takeaway chicken shops are:

- Raw food:
 - Raw chicken – a well-known source of food poisoning bacteria.
 - Eggs – incorrectly stored raw egg products, such as mayonnaise or egg butter, have caused large outbreaks of foodborne illness.
- Food preparation areas (e.g. the kitchen):
 - Slicers and blenders that haven't been cleaned and sanitised properly after use.
 - Bench tops, cutting boards, knives and cloths that have been exposed to raw chicken.
 - Food handlers can spread bacterial and viral foodborne illness, especially if they have gastroenteritis.

Temperature abuse

Most bacteria that cause foodborne illness grow very quickly in warm food. This can be prevented by holding hot food at 60°C and cold food at 5°C or less.

Cooking to the correct temperature kills most food poisoning bacteria and viruses. Some bacteria form a spore (like a tough seed) that is not killed by normal cooking processes. Spores will activate in warm food and can grow to very large numbers if they have time. Correct storage and prompt cooling and reheating of food control this risk.

Contamination plus temperature abuse

Foodborne illness is often associated with a 'string of errors' in the cooking and storage process.

Contaminated food can cause foodborne illness, but contaminated food held at incorrect temperatures can cause very large outbreaks of foodborne illness.

Survey of takeaway chicken shops

A recent [survey of NSW takeaway chicken shops](#) by nineteen local councils and the NSW Food Authority (see www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/science/market-analysis/takeaway-chicken) found that:

- the majority of businesses surveyed displayed hot gravy and mayonnaise-based salads at inappropriate temperatures.

40% of businesses held shredded or diced chicken for use the next day at inappropriate temperatures for an extended period of time.

- 40% of businesses cooled gravy in large containers.
- 45% of businesses used inappropriate sanitation for food preparation surfaces.

Reference

David Mossel, Jaap Jensen and Corry Struijk. *Microbiological safety assurance applied to smaller catering operations world-wide; from angst through ardour to assistance and achievement – the facts*. Food Control 10 (1999) 195–211.

More information

- Visit the Food Authority's website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry
- See industry guides and factsheets: [Potentially hazardous foods](#); [Protecting food from contamination](#); [Cleaning and sanitising in food businesses](#); [Health and hygiene requirements of food handlers](#)
- Phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).



Department of
Primary Industries
Food Authority

6 Avenue of the Americas, Newington NSW 2127
PO Box 6682, Silverwater NSW 1811
T 1300 552 406
contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
ABN 47 080 404 416

More resources at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au



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