

High-risk food activities in class 2 food service and retail food premises

Guidance for environmental health officers

OFFICIAL

Introduction

A class 2 food service premises includes businesses responsible for any meal for immediate consumption on or in the vicinity of the premises. This includes restaurants, takeaway outlets, caterers, temporary and mobile food premises.

Retail food premises means food businesses that sell direct to the public and may also sell food products that they have processed from raw ingredients to other food premises within the local area. For example, a baker selling direct to the public and also supplying local cafes with baked goods.

Class 2 food service and retail food premises are exempt from the requirement to have a food safety program (FSP) except if one or more of the eight gazetted high-risk food handling activities listed below are undertaken at the premises. Businesses that undertake at least one of the eight high-risk activities are required to have an FSP addressing all food handling activities occurring within the premises.

High-risk food handling activities

1. Sous vide cooking at less than 75 °C

Food is cooked under controlled temperature and time conditions inside vacuum sealed packages in water baths or steam ovens.

Sous vide food must be cooked using a time and temperature combination that results in safe food. It is critical that it is done correctly.

The Department of Health (the department) developed an approved standard FSP template for use by class 2 food retail and service businesses. This approved FSP is called FoodSmart and is available [online](#) <FoodSmart (foodsmart.vic.gov.au)> Alternatively, a business can develop their own non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

FoodSmart cannot be used for sous vide cooking at temperatures below 55 °C. A minimum temperature of 55 °C is required to prevent the growth of *Clostridium perfringens*. A non-standard FSP will be required if cooking below 55 °C.

An FSP is not required for sous vide cooking at, or above, 75 °C.

2. Any potentially hazardous food that does not involve temperature control to minimise the growth of pathogenic or toxigenic organisms as described in Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code, Standard 3.2.2

Potentially hazardous food includes, but is not limited to, sushi, cured meats, aged beef, smoked foods, and Chinese-style roasted meats, where the food is prepared or stored outside of temperature and time control as described in the department's food safety literature and guidance. For example, the department's food safety literature relating to the 2-hour / 4-hour rule to store ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food. Foods stored outside of these limits will require an FSP.

The department's approved FSP template, FoodSmart, can be used if the food handling activity is listed.

If the food handling activity is not listed in FoodSmart, the business must develop its own non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

3. Preparation of acidified/fermented foods or drinks that are ready-to-eat and have a high level of acidity required to keep food safe, acid may be naturally present or added or produced by the food (due to microbial activity)

Foods where pH has been altered either through fermentation, or by the addition of an acid, include fruit and vegetables (brine, oil, vinegar), sauerkraut, olives, mushrooms, semi dry tomatoes, kombucha, century eggs, and mayonnaise. These kinds of foods are produced using pH on its own, or in combination with other intrinsic factors, to prevent the growth of food pathogens or toxins.

The department's approved FSP template, FoodSmart, can be used if the food handling activity is listed.

If the food handling activity is not listed in FoodSmart, the business must develop its own non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

If the proprietor is relying on pH control to minimise the growth of food poisoning pathogens, an FSP must be used. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has concluded that a pH minimum of 4.2 is appropriate for the control of *Salmonella spp.* and other vegetative pathogens. Foods with this value normally do not require temperature control for food safety.

4. Preparation of ready-to-eat foods containing raw unshelled eggs (unpasteurised)

Meals or desserts that contain raw eggs, that is, eggs that have not gone through a heat treatment and are consumed raw are categorised as a high-risk process. Foods including mayonnaise, tiramisu, mousse, egg wash used on pizza. This category does not include eggs that have gone through a pasteurisation process or the handling of shelled eggs (a class 3 activity).

Ready-to-eat foods that contain egg in its final form have the potential to be hazardous and therefore require special care and handling. These products have been associated with numerous food poisoning outbreaks through poor food handling, and/or time and temperature controls not implemented to control the growth of spoilage and pathogenic microorganisms. The minimum temperature to prevent the growth of *Salmonella Spp.* is 5 °C.

For further information regarding the safe handling of eggs please refer to [health.vic](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/food-safety/guide-for-food-businesses/safe-preparation-of-raw-egg-products) <Guide for food businesses: Safe preparation of raw egg products (health.vic.gov.au)>.

Food proprietors of food service and retail food premises can use the department's approved FSP template, FoodSmart, if the premises is relying on temperature control and correct food handling practices to minimise the growth of food poisoning pathogens.

The department's FSP makes no reference to pH or water activity. If pH or water activity is used to minimise the growth of microorganisms without temperature control, a non-standard FSP will be required.

There is no reference to the length of time a ready-to-eat food that contains raw egg, in its final form, can be stored under temperature control in FoodSmart. This is consistent with other potentially hazardous foods stored under temperature control.

The length of time a ready-to-eat food that contains raw egg can be kept under refrigeration will be dependent on many factors. For this reason, it is important that a risk assessment of the process be conducted. Reference resources indicate a period of no more than 24 hours; however, this is an indication, a risk assessment will determine if this is suitable or not.

5. Preparation of ready-to-eat raw or rare minced/finely chopped red meats

Foods in this category all contain minced or finely chopped red meats that are either raw or rare (minimally cooked) and include foods such as steak tartare, rare/raw hamburgers.

This does not include finely sliced raw meats such as carpaccio or steaks that have been cooked to the customer's requirements, as most bacteria is on the surface of the meat and is destroyed when the meat is seared before slicing.

There is no department-developed and approved FSP for the preparation and serving of ready-to-eat raw or rare minced meat. A business undertaking this process will require a non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

6. Preparation of ready-to-eat raw and rare poultry and game meats

This category of food covers the preparation of ready-to-eat raw and rare poultry and game meat, regardless of whether it is a muscle or mincemeat, where it is served raw or rare.

Poultry meat includes, but is not limited to, chicken, duck, goose, pigeon, dove, quail, pheasants. Game meats include kangaroo, wild boar, emu, crocodile, and rabbit that is not raised on a farm.

For further information concerning game meat please refer to the [PrimeSafe website](https://www.primesafe.vic.gov.au) <Game Harvester Guideline Amended January 2021 - updated (web).pdf (primesafe.vic.gov.au)>.

There is no department developed and approved FSP template for this activity.

A business undertaking this process will require a non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

The following link provides an Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [case study](#) investigation involving the preparation of rare duck meat. It can be found at: <Communicable Diseases Intelligence - A foodborne outbreak of campylobacteriosis at a wedding – Melbourne, Australia, 2022 (health.gov.au)>.

7. Off-site catering

Off-site catering refers to an arrangement between a caterer and a person who is paying for the business to provide food for a function, including when the food is partially prepared at the function. It does not include merely delivering the food to the function. Examples of off-site catering include arrangements made with a caterer for a wedding reception, a function for staff, a dinner for club members, a party, a wake, or a community group activity or event. Usually, off-site catering is arranged for a predetermined number of persons, but this is not essential.

Off-site catering does not include catering activity where:

- the food has been prepared and delivered to an office for lunches or similar events where the food does not require any further preparation such as reheating, portioning or garnishing

- businesses that do not supply food for the event but provide wait-staff to serve the food at the event.

The department's approved FSP template, FoodSmart, can be used or the business can develop its own non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

8. Any other complex food process activity

Any other complex food process activities include processes, such as:

- Heated treatment, not reasonably known, such as:
 - pasteurisation
 - any other thermal cooking that involves specific temperature and time outside of those stated in the department's food safety literature and guidance materials.
- Vacuum packaging and modified atmosphere-packaging processes that can increase the shelf life of the food and, even under temperature control, may create an environment that will support the growth of pathogens.
- Any other food processing which does not involve the use of temperature control, such as processes that impact the intrinsic factors of food, such as fermentation, smoking, dehydration, addition of salt/sugar, acid to preserve foods. Altering the intrinsic factors of food may be used to extend the shelf life of the product without the need for temperature/time control.

'Any other complex food process', within the meaning of clause 10(h), refers to a process to produce food where the critical limits are not familiar or reasonably known to most class 2 food services or retail food premises proprietors.

'Reasonably known' within this context relates to, the critical limits of temperature and time described within the department's food safety literature and guidance materials.

The department's food safety literature relates to:

- the cooking temperature of 75 °C as a critical limit, to reduce pathogens
- cooling hot foods – two hours to reduce the temperature from 60 °C to 21 °C and four hours from 21 °C to 5 °C
- reheating cooled foods for the purpose of hot holding to 75 °C
- hot holding reheated foods at 60 °C
- using the 2-hour / 4-hour rule to store ready-to-eat potentially hazardous food outside of temperature control.

Critical limits that involve temperature/time/ humidity or pH and/or water activity, or any other intrinsic or extrinsic factor not described within the department's food safety literature and guidance, is not expected to be reasonably known. These activities will result in an FSP required for the premises. There is no department developed and approved FSP template for these activities. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has concluded that a pH minimum of 4.2 is appropriate for the control of *Salmonella spp.* and other vegetative pathogens, or a water activity of 0.85 or less. Foods with these values do not require temperature control.

A business undertaking this process will require a non-standard FSP that is audited by a department approved food safety auditor.

Further information

Please email the [Food Safety Unit](mailto:foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au): <foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au>.

To receive this document in another format, phone 1300 364 352, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email the [Food Safety Unit](mailto:foodsectorsupport@health.vic.gov.au) <<foodsectorsupport@health.vic.gov.au>

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