

Food Storage and Handling

Stock Control

Stock Control is important as it ensures that foods are not kept beyond their shelf life and that food is safe and suitable for consumption. Food that is left for too long and in unfavourable conditions, bacteria can begin to multiply. Even foods that are tinned or frozen still have a shelf life and can deteriorate over time if kept for too long. Foods that are stored for too long in unfavourable conditions can become more contaminated through contact with food handlers, pests etc.

In terms of stock control, there are two main hazards:

- Microbiological Contamination – Incorrect stock rotation, storage and food handling may result in microbiological contamination of food.
- Physical Contamination – incorrect transportation, storage and food handling may result in stock becoming physically contaminated.

There are controls that you can implement to ensure safe stock control. These include:

Delivery

- Do not accept foods delivered in damaged containers as this could indicate contamination.
- Do not accept foods that have passed their 'use by' date.
- You can also reject delivered foods that are beyond their 'best before' date as the product is not in its most ideal state.

Storage and Labelling

- Do not sell/use food that has past their 'use by' date.
- Foods that have been removed from their packaging or decanted into other packaging/containers should be re-labelled with an appropriate 'use by' date.
- Foods that are prepared or cooked on the premises and then stored afterwards, should be labelled with an appropriate 'use by' date.

Stock Rotation

- Food stock should be rotated on a 'first-in first-out' basis.

- All damaged foods should be removed from display and storage areas.
- Ensure that all existing foods are used first prior to using new stock.

Try to get into the habit of conducting regular inspections of your stock to ensure all foods are still in date. If there is damaged or contaminated stock, mark the items for disposal and keep them separated from other stock.

Note: There is a difference between 'best before' and 'use by' dates.

- **'Best before' date** –

Used for shelf-stable foods such as biscuits, confectionary, frozen foods and raw foods (meat, chicken, and fish) that will noticeably spoil before becoming a safety issue.

- **'Use by' date** – Used for food that must be consumed before a certain date for health and safety reasons.

How Long to Keep Foods in the Refrigerator:

Seafood 0-3°C 3 days

FOOD	OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE	TIME
Seafood	0-3°C	3 days
Minced meat	0-3°C	2-3 days
Poultry	0-3°C	3 days
Leftovers	0-3°C	3-5 days
Meat	0-3°C	3-5 days

(Source: CSIRO
<https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/Health/Foodsafety/Food-handling.aspx>)

Avoiding Cross Contamination

Cross contamination is the main reason for many foodborne illness outbreaks. Even if meat has been cooked correctly, meals can still become contaminated with bacteria if cross-contamination is not avoided in the preparation process.



If raw foods come into contact with ready-to-eat foods, cross contamination can occur.

Food storage

Raw meats should always be stored on the bottom shelf of the cold-room or refrigerator to stop their blood and juices from dripping onto other foods

Raw meat, poultry and seafood should be stored in covered containers or sealed plastic bags. Ready-to-eat foods should be kept covered and protected when being stored. Meats and ready-to-eat foods should never be placed next to each other or on the same shelves in the cold-room or refrigerator.

Chopping boards and utensils

- Use separate areas in the kitchen to handle raw and ready-to-eat foods
- Use one chopping board for raw meat, poultry and seafood
- Use a separate chopping board for ready to-eat foods
- Use separate plates and utensils for cooked and raw foods
- Thoroughly clean and sanitise plates, utensils and cutting boards that have come into contact with raw meat before using
- Chopping boards should be replaced if excessively scratched or damaged.

Hand Hygiene

Ensure food handlers wash their hands properly and in between going from handling raw meats to ready-to-eat foods.

Food contact surfaces

Food contact surfaces such as counters, benchtops and equipment should be cleaned and sanitised after raw meats have been near them.

Tea towels and cloths

Tea towels and cloths can be a source of contamination if being used to clean surfaces and dry hands. Where possible, use single use cloths or separate cloths to clean up work surfaces for raw meats and ready-to-eat foods. Dry hands after washing with single

use paper towels. Chefs should avoid tea towel use when preparing food as it's a source of contamination.

More information:

Contact Council and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Officer.