

# Food & Safety

## BULLETIN



Winter 2016

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### Other ways to contact us:

Tel: 01803 208025  
[www.torbay.gov.uk/foodsafety](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/foodsafety)



## Welcome

to the festive 11th edition of our Food & Safety Bulletin, included are articles of interest on food safety that are likely to be relevant to your business.

If you would like any help or advice on any of the articles in this edition please contact a member of the Team on the details below.

Wishing you a successful winter season.

**Helen Perkins - Principal Environmental Health Officer, Community Safety**

## Ready to eat food for retail sale

The Welsh Food Standards Agency have published an advice leaflet aimed at businesses on purchasing chilled, ready-to-eat foods for sale at retail, such as filled sandwiches, rolls and wraps. This leaflet has been developed in collaboration with local authority officers in Wales and has been translated into a range of languages including English, Welsh, Chinese, Urdu, Hindu and Bengali.

The intention of the leaflet is to assist businesses in understanding their obligations under food law, when purchasing and retailing pre-packed, chilled, ready-to-eat foods. The leaflet sets-out quick and easy checks that can be performed by food business operators to ensure they exercise all due diligence for purchasing and retailing chilled, ready-to-eat foods. The advice leaflet is also relevant to English businesses and is available at the link below:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/wales/regswales/regsguid-wales/advice-on-chilled-ready-to-eat-foods-for-sale>



# Don't be a turkey!

## top tips for a Christmas free from food poisoning

During the season of festive cheer, one gift you don't want to give your customers is food poisoning. Here are our top tips for safe preparation and cooking for Christmas meals.

### Planning

- Make sure that you have enough fridge and freezer space and that your fridge temperature is running between 0 and 8°C, ideally below 5°C.
- If you buy a frozen bird, ensure that it is allowed time to properly defrost. If it's still partially frozen, the recommended cooking times won't be long enough to cook it thoroughly leading to survival of bacteria and potential food poisoning.
- Defrosting should be carried out either in the refrigerator or in a cool room. A good guide for defrosting in the fridge is 12 hours per kg, and in a cool room (15°C) is 7 hours per kilo. An 8 kg (17.5 lb) turkey will take 4 days to thaw in the fridge. At the end of thawing, take a look inside the body cavity. It should reveal no ice crystals. Also the legs should not be stiff but move freely. If there are still ice crystals and/or the legs are a little stiff, more defrosting time will be required (always follow the instructions on the packaging). Make sure it doesn't touch other foods and the dish used is large enough to collect the liquid.

### Cooking

- For roasting it is recommended that birds are cooked for 40 minutes per kg at 190°C. As such, an 8kg bird will take 320 minutes (5h 20 min). Follow any instructions on the packaging.
- Never part cook poultry the night before.
- Ensure that the turkey is thoroughly cooked. Part the skin between the leg and breast; if it's still a little pink, then allow extra cooking time. Juices should run clear, not pink. When you cut into the thickest part of the turkey, none of the meat should be pink.
- When using a food temperature probe, ensure that the thickest part of the bird (between the breast and the thigh) reaches at least 75°C for 30 seconds.

### Avoid contamination

- Wash hands thoroughly in hot soapy water before preparing food and especially after touching raw meat and other raw foods.
- Clean equipment and surfaces thoroughly after preparing raw foods and before contact with other foods by using an anti-bacterial sanitiser.
- Always store cooked or ready to eat foods on a higher shelf than raw foods in the refrigerator. Remember raw food includes vegetables.
- Never use the same chopping board for raw poultry and ready to eat foods.
- It is not necessary to wash the turkey - washing the turkey before cooking can increase the risk of food poisoning from campylobacter as you may spread bacteria via splashing throughout your kitchen. Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK, affecting 280,000 people a year, including more than 100 deaths. Cleaning raw poultry or washing off visible blood does not make it any more hygienic or remove bacteria – only thorough cooking achieves this.
- Don't leave leftovers sitting around as food poisoning bacteria can grow and multiply. Cool any leftovers quickly, ideally within two hours before putting in the fridge. To speed cooling divide the food into smaller portions and put on a cooling rack.
- Avoid re-heating food more than once.
- If you do reheat leftovers, ensure that they are piping hot.
- Ideally, don't keep leftovers for more than 2 days.

### Always follow the Christmas code:

**Cleaning** Sanitise work surfaces and chopping boards.

**Cooking** Cook thoroughly.

**Chilling** Cool quickly and keep in the refrigerator.

- If you want to keep leftovers longer than two days, you can freeze them instead. Cool leftovers before putting them into the freezer and use within one month. Once defrosted, don't refreeze the leftovers.



# Monosodium Glutamate

Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) is a naturally occurring substance that is used in the food industry as a flavour enhancer. If you can remember back to the 1970's and 80's, MSG hit the headlines as it is believed by many people that it is the cause of headaches when it is used in foods. If you can remember back that far, you might think it's banned in food. It isn't.

MSG is commonly used as flavour enhancer in Chinese style take away food. The maximum amount allowed is strictly controlled (10g per kg). What does this mean to businesses? If you are using MSG, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully, and never be tempted to use more to increase the flavour of the food you sell.



## Nutrition Labelling

If you are a packer of food, you should be aware that from the 13th December 2016 it is compulsory to display the nutritional breakdown of the food. This is often referred to as "Back of pack labelling". You will probably be familiar with seeing this type of information on the food you buy from the supermarket. There are exemptions for several food types and for small packers. More information can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/555937/2016\\_Nutrition\\_Technical\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/555937/2016_Nutrition_Technical_Guidance.pdf)



## Do you want to improve your food hygiene rating score?

Whilst the majority of food businesses in Torbay have either score a 4 or a 5 on the food hygiene rating scheme, we do unfortunately have a number of businesses with a score of less than 3. If this is your business are you aware that you can apply to be rescored to try and achieve a better rating?

You can apply to receive a rescoring inspection at any time and the form can be downloaded from [www.torbay.gov.uk/foodsafety](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/foodsafety). There will be a cooling off period of 3 months from the time of your inspection and then we have to visit you within 3 months from the end of that cooling off period.

The form to request a rescoring visit is easy to complete however if you need some guidance on how to complete it then contact the Food Safety Team on 01803 208025. The rescoring visit will be an unannounced inspection as we need to ensure that the rating given is a true reflection of what is happening in the business.

Getting a good food hygiene rating is an obvious business advantage as the general public in Torbay are increasingly using the National Food Hygiene website [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) to make an informed choice on where they want to eat out in and shop at.



# Don't let the bed bugs BITE!

Bed bugs are a nocturnal parasite that feed on human blood, often leaving itchy bites similar to mosquito bites. Adults are up to 6mm in length (about the size of a ladybird), and are oval shaped. They range from almost colourless, to a dark reddish brown after feeding.

The adult female lays her eggs in secluded places close to where people sleep. As their bodies are flat bed bugs can squeeze into the smallest of spaces like bed frame and headboard joints, mattress seams, divan bed bases, behind skirting boards, under peeling wallpaper, bedside cabinets and even inside electrical sockets and picture frames.

Bed bugs emerge from these places during the night and feed on humans, before returning to the harborage areas to digest this meal. If the bedbug has no one to feed on, it can lie dormant for up to 12 months, waiting for a new food source to arrive. They're not attracted to dirt, so a bedbug infestation isn't a sign of an unclean room. Bedbugs may be found in all types of housing, but are more common in short-term accommodation such as hotels often brought in by luggage, clothing, furniture and bedding. This makes it easy for tourists to unknowingly spread bed bugs. They can also spread within a building by crawling through holes in walls or pipes.

Although bedbugs can be upsetting and stressful to find, they aren't dangerous and don't transmit any human diseases. Most people don't develop any serious skin reaction. However, you should take action straight away to prevent the spread of an infestation.

## How to spot them:

- Look for any unexplained skin rash or itchy bump (although not everyone develops this).
- Look out for black spots (like an ink dot) on your mattress – this could be their dried faeces.
- Look for mottled shells that bedbugs may have shed.
- Check sheets for blood spots/smears where a bug might have been squashed after it has fed.
- Inspect all crevices and joints of mattresses and furniture using a torch to look for bugs.



## Getting rid of bed bugs

It can be extremely difficult to get rid of a bed bug infestation so it's wise to contact a professional pest control company immediately if you discover them. Make sure housekeeping staff know the common signs to look out for, such as regular mattress inspections, and who to tell if they spot the signs. You can also buy passive bed bug monitors which can aid early detection.

For more information on bed bugs visit <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/bed-bugs/Pages/Introduction.aspx>.

## The Pensions Regulator - automatic enrolment for employers

The law on workplace pensions has changed. Under the Pensions Act 2008, every employer in the UK must put certain staff into a pension scheme and contribute towards it. This is called 'automatic enrolment'.

Whether you're cafe owner, a hairdresser or employ a personal care assistant, if you employ at least one person you are an employer and you have certain legal duties.

It's important that you understand what to do and by when, this will depend on your circumstances and those of your staff. To work out what you need to do and when you need to do it, use the online 'Duties Checker' to find out [www.tpr.gov.uk/employers](http://www.tpr.gov.uk/employers).

If you already offer a pension scheme to your staff, then you still need to contact your scheme provider to check it is a 'qualifying scheme for automatic enrolment' [www.tpr.gov.uk/scheme](http://www.tpr.gov.uk/scheme).





# Salad Leaves and E. Coli Outbreak

Much focus is given to the risk of e coli from meats but less is known amongst those preparing food about the risk posed by other foods, especially salad items. You may have heard in the news about a large outbreak of a rare strain of E. coli 0157 which affected over 160 people including people in this area. A full investigation by Public Health England (PHE) and a number of local authorities suggest there to be a strong association between infection and consumption of mixed salad leaves, particularly rocket mixed into various salad mixes. The Food Standards Agency also asked several wholesalers to stop adding non UK salad leaves to their mix on a temporary basis whilst investigations were ongoing.

The advice has always been and will continue to be about the importance of removing any loose soil before storing vegetables and to thoroughly wash all vegetables (including salads) that will be eaten raw unless they have been pre-prepared and are specifically labelled 'ready to eat'. These measures may reduce the risk of infection from any E. coli contaminated vegetables, fruit and salad but will not eliminate risk of infection completely. Further measures are taken by a number of businesses which involve the use of types of sanitizing tabs.

We strongly advise maintaining good hand and food hygiene practices at all times. It remains vital to wash hands thoroughly using soap and water after using the toilet, before and after handling food and after contact with any animals and pets, including farm animals.



## Basic Food Hygiene Courses

Running a safe food business means having well trained and knowledgeable staff. This means they need to understand the basics of how to store, prepare and cook food safely. The basic qualification for those working in the food industry is the level 2 Basic Food Hygiene Qualification, ideally one which is recognised by the CIEH. Torbay Council will be offering this qualification from April 2017 to businesses for the competitive rate of £50 which includes the course material and exam. It's a short, one day course with the exam taken at the end. The course will be run in central Torquay on the following dates:

11th April            9th May

13th June            11th July

If you are an employer with a number of staff and would like to discuss training which we could deliver for you at alternative times or place, including the evenings or if you would like the course delivered in two sessions, please contact Isobelle Belcher direct to discuss your ideas

**[isobelle.belcher@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:isobelle.belcher@torbay.gov.uk)**

There is no pre-requisite knowledge needed and consideration will be given for people whose first language isn't English or who may have difficulty reading.

The course will be delivered by qualified trainers who are also practicing EHOs. If you wish to book a place, please do so via the call centre 01803 208025 or if you have any queries contact Isobelle.

This document can be made available in other formats.  
For further information please contact 01803 208025.