

Hygiene Guidelines on Street Food

Objective:

To reduce the health risks posed by street food, the following measures were developed with reference to the “Five Keys to Safer Food” of the World Health Organization.

Scope of Applicability:

Street food: refers to ready-to-eat food prepared and/or sold by stationary vendors or mobile hawkers in the streets or other public areas.

Content:

1. Safe Water and Food Ingredients

As food ingredients (including water and ice) may be contaminated with pathogenic microorganisms and chemicals, therefore:

- Make sure food supply comes from safe and reliable sources;
- Choose good and undamaged fresh food, and do not use mouldy food;
- Wash fruits and vegetables, and peel them (if applicable), especially if they are to be eaten raw or with little cooking;
- Make sure water comes from a safe source. Do not use if in doubt about the water supply. If there is the need to make ice for drinks, water should be boiled first, then cooled down and stored in a freezer;
- Choose cooking oil of stable quality; filter cooking oil frequently to remove oil particles and replace cooking oil regularly to maintain quality¹;
- Pay attention to the food expiry date;
- Make sure to use safe food additives and in proper amounts.

¹ Reference: "Guidelines on the Use of Frying Oil"

2. Keep Clean

As pathogenic microorganisms may be carried on hands, utensils and rubbish bins, while animals, dust and polluted water from the environment may also carry bacteria, therefore:

- Vending locations should be away from rubbish, toilets, open drains and animals;
- Basic sanitation infrastructures should be provided, such as hand washing facilities, safe water supplies and sewers, etc.;
- Keep vending location clean; clean and disinfect the vending areas at least once a day;
- Use covered rubbish bins; empty and disinfect them regularly;
- All work surfaces should be made of impermeable and easy to clean materials, and kept well above the ground;
- Use proper dust-proof and insect-proof equipment to protect food products that are ready for sale. They should not come into contact with dirty items, and should stay away from the ground and avoid exposure to direct sunlight;
- It is recommended that single-use cutlery should be provided to customers. If using re-usable cutlery, it must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use;
- Sufficient cleaning facilities for food and utensils should be provided.

3. Cooking

As proper cooking kills almost all pathogenic microorganisms and destroys certain toxins, therefore:

- Food ingredients, especially meat, poultry, eggs and seafood, should be cooked thoroughly;
- Juices from thoroughly cooked meat and poultry should be clear and not red;
- Soups or stews should bring to a boil and continue to boil for at least one minute;
- Reheat cooked food thoroughly until its core temperature reaches 75 °C or above.

4. Prevent Microorganisms in Food from Growing

As microorganisms can multiply quickly and cause food poisoning when food is stored at room temperature, therefore:

- Keep raw food, especially raw meat, poultry and fish, separate from cooked food;
- Use different sets of knives and chopping boards to handle raw and cooked food separately;
- Follow the “keep hot food hot and cold food cold” principle. Place hot food at above 60 °C and cold food at below 5 °C;
- In situations where refrigeration facilities are limited, it is ideal to prepare food in small amount to reduce the amount of leftovers;
- If food must be prepared in advance, or if there are leftovers or if food needs to be transported from one location to another, make sure to store the food out of the temperature danger zone (i.e. 5 °C to 60 °C).
- Time control: During the whole process of production and operation, it is necessary to shorten the duration that cooked food is left in the temperature danger zone (between 5 °C and 60 °C) as far as possible, as it is potentially hazardous. If it is inevitable, follow the 2 hour/4 hour rule²:
 - Food held at the temperature danger zone for less than 2 hours should be stored in the refrigerator or used immediately;
 - Food held at the temperature danger zone for 2 to 4 hours should be used immediately;
 - Food held at the temperature danger zone for more than 4 hours should be discarded.

5. Maintain Good Personal Hygiene Practices

As pathogenic microorganisms can be transferred from humans to other food during food handling, preparation and storage, therefore, food handlers should:

- Wear clean and light-coloured aprons;

² Reference: "Hygiene Guidelines on Time and Temperature Control"

- Avoid wearing accessories, such as rings, bracelets and watches;
- Use utensils such as tongs, scoops, spoons, clean and single-use gloves when handling ready-to-eat food or ice used in drinks;
- Never re-use single-use gloves, and discard contaminated single-use gloves immediately;
- Avoid smoking, spitting, nose picking, coughing or sneezing over food, tasting food with fingers, etc. during preparation and serving of food;
- Avoid handling money while handling food;
- Keep hands clean. Wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water in the following situations, and not to use dirty wiping cloths to wipe hands:
 - Before handling of food (especially cooked and ready-to-eat food);
 - After using the toilet;
 - After coughing or sneezing;
 - After handling raw food ingredients,
 - After touching hair, nose or other parts of the body;
 - After touching contaminated items, such as money, leftovers and garbage.
- Maintain good personal hygiene practices, such as short fingernails, taking a daily shower, keeping short hair or wearing a cap or a hair net at work; refrain from preparing or handling food when having symptoms of illness such as skin rash, boils and cuts, running nose, eye and ear infections, and diarrhoea.

In addition, employers should ensure that all employees who handle food directly are in good health, and understand and comply with the above food safety and hygiene practices.