

Hygiene Precautions for the Preparation and Sale of Festive Foods for Chinese New Year

Introduction:

The Chinese New Year is an important festival in China. Members of the public will shop for festive goods beforehand to prepare for its arrival, buying a variety of festive food products to celebrate the festival. As to ensure food safety, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has published guidelines on the “Hygiene Precautions for the Preparation and Sale of Festive Foods for Chinese New Year”.

Objective:

These guidelines serve to remind the food sector of the food hygiene and safety practices to be observed during the purchase, storage, preparation and sale of festive foods for Chinese New Year.

Scope of application:

Applicable to producers, suppliers, and retailers of festive foods (including Chinese candied fruits and sweets, glutinous rice cakes, and turnip cakes, among others) for Chinese New Year.

Content:

Key points:

- Purchase food ingredients (e.g. glutinous rice flour, turnips and cooking oil) and festive foods for Chinese New Year from reputable suppliers in good hygiene condition;
- Food ingredients and unpackaged festive foods for Chinese New Year should be kept in covered containers for their adequate protection and stored in the refrigerator as necessary. Raw and cooked foods have to be stored separately in different shelves of the refrigerator, adhering to the principle of “cooked food above raw food”;
- Check all food ingredients in advance and discard those that are spoiled, mouldy or with an unusual smell;
- Do not use non-food additives, as it is prohibited by law, or misuse or overuse food additives;
- Adequately protect festive foods for Chinese New Year and display them in appropriate display equipment. Do not place them together with raw food or miscellaneous items, and keep them away from the ground;
- Always maintain good personal hygiene and wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water before preparing festive foods for Chinese New Year.

1. Purchase

- Purchase food ingredients (such as glutinous rice flour, turnips, and cooking oil, among others) and festive foods for Chinese New Year from reputable suppliers in good hygiene condition;
- Upon receipt of food ingredients and festive foods for Chinese New Year, check whether they are stored at the appropriate temperature and in good condition, free from contamination or damage;
- Do not accept food ingredients and festive foods for Chinese New Year that are beyond expiry date or of poor quality;
- Retain invoices of delivered goods and sales records to facilitate the tracing of the source of goods, as necessary;
- Keep in touch with suppliers and, if necessary, ask them to provide relevant documents, such as information of manufacturers, export health certificates approved by competent authorities, and laboratory reports, among others.



2. Storage

- Food ingredients and festive foods for Chinese New Year should be properly stored under appropriate conditions and temperatures, following the principle of “first in, first out”;
- Place food ingredients and festive foods for Chinese New Year which can be left at room temperature in a well-ventilated and dry environment, away from direct sunlight;
- Store food ingredients and festive foods for Chinese New Year that have to be kept at a low temperature in the refrigerator. Raw and cooked foods have to be stored separately in different shelves of the refrigerator, adhering to the principle of “cooked food above raw food”. The refrigeration temperature should be below 5°C and freezing temperature should be -18°C or lower;
- Food ingredients and unpackaged festive foods for Chinese New Year should be kept in covered containers for their adequate protection;
- Check pest control measures regularly and improve them as necessary to prevent food safety hazards caused by pests.



3. Preparation

- Check all food ingredients and discard those that are spoiled, mouldy or with an unusual smell;
- In the preparation of Chinese steamed cakes, they must be steamed to an internal temperature of 75°C or higher;
- Pay attention to the following in cooling of the steamed cakes that are cooked:
 - Adopt rapid cooling methods to reduce the time required for cooling;
 - Reduce the temperature of the steamed cakes from 60°C to 21°C in the first 2 hours or less; then reduce their temperature from 21°C to below 5°C in the next 4 hours or less.
- Be cautious in the use of plastic containers for food storage. It is deemed necessary to choose the appropriate plastic material, and strictly abide by the indicated maximum temperature tolerance and condition of use of the material. Do not use plastic containers for direct cooking;
- Do not use non-food additives, as it is prohibited by law, or misuse or overuse food additives;
- The use of food additives must be in compliance with the requirements of Administrative Regulation No. 5/2024 “Standards for the Use of Food Additives in Food”, and the amount of a food additive added to food should be kept to a minimum to achieve the intended effect. Food additives must be of food-grade and safe for human consumption, originated from a reliable source, and clearly labeled as “food-grade”, “food additive”, etc. on their packaging.

4. Sale

- It is necessary to choose the appropriate food contact material for food packaging and of food containers, based on the properties, temperature, and usage of the food;
- Adequately protect festive foods for Chinese New Year and display them in appropriate display equipment. Do not place them together with raw food or miscellaneous items, and keep them away from the ground;
- Pay attention to storage temperature of steamed cakes. Keep them refrigerated at below 5°C or at a hot holding temperature of above 60°C to prevent spoilage;
- Venues for selling food products and vehicles used for food transport have to be kept clean and in good hygiene condition at all times.



5. Personal hygiene

- Always maintain good personal hygiene and wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water before preparing festive foods for Chinese New Year;
- Do not wear rings, bracelets, watch or any hand accessories, or put on nail polish or artificial nails;
- If experiencing symptoms such as sore throat, diarrhoea, or vomiting, do not handle the food;
- Cover open wounds on skin or hands with waterproof dressing before handling the food;
- Do not handle money and food at the same time.

