

# Kick-off to Food Safety!

The countdown clock's are all ticking and the country is gearing itself for a number of large sporting events. Estimating volumes, securing suppliers, planning logistics in terms of delivery of products to venues in and around the stadiums, challenged by security measures and road closures is a monumental task facing the food suppliers. But underpinning all this is one fundamental non-negotiable - Food Safety.

All food products supplied must meet the strictest standards of food safety and all relevant legislation must be complied with, by manufacturers and suppliers to ensure food products supplied and consumed during this period are 100% safe. We cannot afford to risk our reputation as the host nation with an outbreak of food poisoning. Feeding masses of people is a logistical challenge but also a safety challenge that needs to be planned for.

Food safety is generally taken for granted by the consumer, as the right to safe food is a basic human right. Ensuring that all the food procured and supplied is safe is a little more complex and requires the commitment of all members of the supply chain. From the farm to fork the product must be handled, stored, processed, packaged and distributed ensuring that at no point the food or beverage item becomes contaminated.

A food product is regarded as contaminated when there is either a presence of physical matter (i.e. a piece of glass), bacteria (i.e. salmonella) or chemicals (i.e. melamine) that can cause, injury, illness or disease if consumed. Furthermore, food categories can be classified into different risk categories based on food safety hazards. This means that a product that is manufactured with the intention of the customer being able to consume it directly without first cooking or re-heating it – is High Risk, as there are no steps after manufacture to reduce the microbiological, physical or chemical hazards. Similarly if a product has a high protein content, has a source of moisture and a pH (acidity value) of >4.5 then bacteria is likely to survive and multiply if the temperature of the product rises to between 5 - 63°C (danger zone) - an ideal example of a High Risk ready-to-eat product would be sliced cold meat cuts. Food products that are dry (no moisture), processed or have a high concentration of acid in their formulation generally do not support harmful food bacteria and are therefore not regarded as High Risk.

Our role in the food safety chain is quite straight forward - we need to procure, manufactured/processed food products from reputable suppliers who have adopted audited food safety principles such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's) into their facilities. We need to receive the products in good order, store and handle them with utmost care to maintain packaging integrity and temperature range (cold chain), rotate the stock to maximise shelf life of the product and deliver the product in good order to the customer. All products handled by Caterplus and its group of Companies must be accompanied by the manufacturers product specification and must be labelled in accordance with the Foodstuffs, Cosmetic and Disinfectants Act – labelling regulation, all products must have an expiry date and all products must be traceable through the food chain.

None of the above is just for the forthcoming sports spectacles – this is how the Caterplus Group will manage food safety on behalf of our customers for 2010 and beyond!

**Written by:**  
**Jane Russill**  
**Quality Risk Manager for Caterplus**



## “How to Ensure I am Food Safety Ready”

- **Prominently display a valid Certificate of Food Premise Acceptability**- issued by the local Environmental Health Department, this is a legal requirement for all food establishments.
- **Check all incoming deliveries** to ensure that products are correctly labelled and have a “best before” or clearly marked expiry date - rotate stock using a “FIFO” system – First In First Out.
- **Invest in a good quality, electronic food probe thermometer** that can measure to -20°C and as high as 85°C
- **Check and record the temperature** of all incoming chilled and frozen food products - by law all refrigerated products should be ≤7°C and frozen products ≤-12°C.
- **Ensure that you have a documented pest control system** and that the service provider visits your premises at least every 4 weeks.
- **Do not use any domestic cleaning products in your kitchen or catering facility** – only use SABS food grade approved chemicals from a reputable supplier that can provide you with all the necessary supporting documentation and material safety data sheets(MSDS).
- **Check the display temperature of your freezer or fridge** at least 3 times per day and record the temperatures.
- **Keep hot foods hot (≥65°C) and cold foods cold (≤5°C).**
- **Make sure that all raw and ready-to-eat products are stored separately** and that all leftovers are kept covered and are labelled with the date on which they were made so that you can rotate the use of leftovers with no risk.
- **Cold food products such as a salad buffet should not be left at room temperature for longer than 4 hours** – after that it must be discarded. Rather replenish salad bowls more frequently than placing large quantities on display.
- **Make sure that all hand-wash basins are clean and supplied with a liquid anti-bacterial hand-soap, and paper towel.** Kitchen staff should wash their hands as often as every 30 minutes to prevent cross contamination and the potential spread of germs. In areas where there is no hand-wash basin install a dispenser with an alcohol based hand sanitiser that will help keep hands germ free until they can be washed properly.
- **Encourage staff to report to you immediately if they are not feeling well**, so that they can get appropriate medical attention and also not expose the other members of staff and customers to infection.

Useful website links for more food safety information, service providers and legislation:

- Food safety consultants and specialist services: [www.thefoodsafetynetwork.co.za](http://www.thefoodsafetynetwork.co.za)
- Department of Health: [www.doh.gov.za](http://www.doh.gov.za)
- SA National Bottled Water Association: [www.sanbwa.org.za](http://www.sanbwa.org.za)
- Other useful info (international): [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk) (Food Standards Agency UK)