



Food safety checks for food businesses (such as cafes and restaurants) preparing to recommence pre-restriction operations

A checklist to ensure businesses are ready and have good food safety and hygiene practices before reopening or returning to dine-in operations.

1. Check your business can re-open

- Before you re-open or re-commence operations check for any changes to business restrictions in place in your state or territory. You must also check whether specific guidelines or requirements to recommence business apply in your state and territory. Links to the relevant website can be found on the [COVID-19 Information on restrictions that apply to food businesses](#) webpage of the [Food Standards Australia New Zealand website](#) on COVID-19.
- Review and implement any social distancing requirements requested by the Australian government, New Zealand government or your State or Territory.
- If you are unsure about reopening contact your Local Council or Food Safety Regulatory Authority for further information.

2. Staff availability, skills and knowledge, health and hygiene

- Be aware of the signs of COVID 19 and make sure your staff do not show any symptoms.
- Staff who are unwell should not be at work.
- If staff develop symptoms at work such as fever, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath they should be immediately isolated and medical advice sought. For more information on identifying the symptoms of COVID-19, go to <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-identifying-the-symptoms>
- Make sure you have sufficient staff available for effective operation (food preparation, service, cleaning)
- Any new or replacement staff must be aware of the requirements to ensure food is safe and suitable.
- It is a good idea to remind staff of health and hygiene policies, and that it is always vital that hands and food preparation surfaces and equipment are kept clean, even more so at this time. If in any doubt about what you should do, contact your local council Environmental Health Officer.
- Make sure you have trained staff that are able to comply with any relevant Responsible Service of Alcohol or Food Safety Supervisor requirements in your state/territory
- Have a plan in place should one of your staff members test positive for COVID-19. For example, maintain accurate records of your work rosters, to identify who has been in close proximity with one another during a shift
- Encourage your staff to download the COVIDSafe App to assist with contact tracing should someone test positive for COVID-19.

3. Check that the premises is suitable for preparing or handling food

- Was your business premise/building closed or operating minimally during the COVID19 restrictions?
- If yes, make sure that nothing has happened during the closure or reduced operation that stops you from operating safely. Check that food, equipment and other surfaces have not become contaminated from issues such as maintenance activities, or leaks, increased pest activity or reduced use of the facility. Make sure the services you need for power, water supply and drainage are working as intended.

a. Check the condition of the services and equipment

- Make sure that services, facilities and equipment are fully functioning.
- Have power and water supplies to the building been damaged or turned off during the COVID-19 response, and have they been restored?

If any services cannot be used, have you made adequate provision for:

- electricity
- gas
- toilets
- hand-washing with clean warm running water, soap, single use towels
- waste disposal (including food waste)
- cooking, refrigerating and freezing food or any other process essential in food preparation (e.g mixing, slicing)

b. Pest control

- Check for any signs of pest infestation e.g. cockroaches and rodents (rat or mice droppings, fly or cockroach spotting (faeces)), gnawed food and food packaging.
- Carry out pest control before opening.
- Throw out food or packaging damaged by pests.
- Throw out all other food in damaged or open packaging.
- Clean premises, utensils and packaging (where appropriate) before opening.

c. Check toilets and hygiene facilities are working

- Make sure toilets and handwashing facilities for staff and customers (if applicable) are in working order and have warm running water, soap and paper towels.

d. Water used in the business

- Flush clean water through machines that are plumbed into the water supply, such as ice machines, drinking fountains, coffee machines, slush-ice makers, post mix guns, self-service soft drink machines and water coolers, especially if these haven't been turned off during restrictions.

4. Cleaning and sanitising

Areas used for food preparation and serving will need to be thoroughly cleaned, and food preparation surfaces and utensils cleaned and sanitised before use to ensure there is no risk to food safety.

- Clean packaged (sealed) food if required, before opening it.
- Check all stocks of food packaging materials are clean (e.g. takeaway containers).
- Clean all food areas and clean and sanitise food surfaces, utensils and equipment.
- Clean customer areas and clean and sanitise crockery and cutlery etc.

Ensure an appropriate sanitiser concentration is used, especially where equipment and premises have not been used for some time (e.g. 200ppm chlorine for as an initial sanitising step prior to resuming operation).

Refer to <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/Pages/COVID-19---Advice-for-food-businesses-on-general-health-and-hygiene.aspx> for cleaning & sanitising information.

5. Food in refrigerators, cool rooms and freezers

Check whether fridges, cool rooms and freezers have been without power, as the safety of stored food may have been affected. Things to consider include:

- If power was off for more than 4 hours, or chillers were opened, potentially-hazardous foods (such as foods that contain meat, poultry, seafood and dairy products) may have reached temperatures above 5°C and will need to be thrown away regardless of their current temperature.
- If power to fridges and cool rooms was off for less than 4 hours, and fridge/cool room doors were not opened, check the temperature of the food to ensure it is still less than 5°C.
- Perishable foods in the fridge/cool room for example fruit and hard cheeses, may still be safe to use if these are not showing obvious signs of spoilage.
- All opened ready-to-eat perishable packaged food (such as processed meats) opened more than a few days, may need to be thrown out, even if it is within the Use-By date. Consider the suitability of food that is within the Best Before date, but that may have been compromised during any shutdown or reduced operation period.
- If a freezer was full, power was off for less than 24 hours, the freezer was not opened during the power cut AND there is no evidence of thawing, contents should be OK to use.
- If the freezer was opened during the power cut, the freezer was not full, there is any evidence that contents have completely thawed, or have thawed then refrozen, throw this food out.
- Food still frozen with ice crystals throughout it can continue to be kept frozen if you are sure it did not thaw out and then re-freeze when the power came back on.
- Frozen food that has defrosted and was refrozen when the power was restored should not be used. This will not always be obvious, but important signs of defrosting and refreezing will be: misshapen products; drip from packaging that has become frozen; packages stuck together; or pooling of frozen fluids in the bottom of sealed packages.
- Throw out any food past its use-by date.
- Check to see if any foods have been contaminated during storage – throw out if signs of damage, contamination or spoilage.
- If in doubt, throw it out.

More about [potentially hazardous food](#) can be found on the FSANZ website.

6. Sourcing new supplies

- If you are restocking from suppliers that were not trading during the restrictions, check your supplier has taken the steps above.
- If you are supplied with different products or brands, check they meet your recipes and/or processes and don't contain unexpected ingredients or allergens. Where ingredients or foods contain different allergens to previous recipes or menus, you will need to let customers and staff know, and update labels and other relevant documents (such as menus) as required.

7. Local Council Inspections

- Check when your next food safety inspection is due or whether you require an inspection before reopening or commencing a new process. Please note that depending on the local council COVID-19 response policies, your inspection may need to be completed using technology, like Skype. Any questions, please contact your local council Environmental Health Officer for advice.

8. Stay up to date on COVID-19 and food safety

- This check list will be updated when new information comes to hand.
- Check the FSANZ website for up-to-date information on COVID-19 and food safety:
<https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/NOVEL-CORONAVIRUS-AND-FOOD-SAFETY.aspx>