

Lakes Food Newsletter



Issue 12/January 12

Happy New Year and welcome.....

.....to the latest issue of the Lakes Food Newsletter for 2011, which focusses on the QLDC Food Safety Bylaw and in particular on grading. We would also like to advise you that we are back out doing regular food sampling, so don't be alarmed if we turn up to collect a sample of a particular food from your premises. Every month we will be targeting a specific food and will take samples from a few premises that sell that type of food. If samples are found to have unsatisfactory levels of bacteria we will help you work out what could be causing the contamination and assist you in taking corrective action.

The QLDC Food Safety Bylaw

The Food Safety Bylaw came into effect on 7 October 2011 and we are now in our fourth month of grading premises. Every food premises is now graded at the time of the annual inspection and a number of you will have already experienced your first grading inspection. At the end of the inspection the Environmental Health Officer will take you through the grading schedule which includes six categories: personal hygiene practices, temperature control, food protection, cleaning and sanitising, structure of the premises, and training and supervision. They will explain how many points you were awarded for each category. The total number of points determines the grade of the premises.

Grades awarded are not going to be on the registration certificates until the next registration period (i.e. from October 2012), but the grade your premises is awarded in this registration period will count. From October every premises will be required to display their grade at each entrance to the premises so that customers are able to see it before entering. Your registration fee will also be linked to the grade achieved – the better your grade the less you pay! Read the information below so that you are well prepared and please contact us with any questions you have in regards to the Bylaw.

Personal hygiene practices

We can't emphasise this enough – the main thing we look at here is hand washing, hand washing, hand washing! Not having your wash hand basin easily accessible and set up with soap and paper towels will seriously affect your points. We also look for signage and any procedures relating to hand washing and observe staff to see whether they are washing their hands, doing so properly and at the correct basin. We will not be impressed to see food handlers rinsing their hands at the food prep sink and then drying them on a tea towel.

We will also look at whether or not food handlers are wearing an appropriate and clean uniform, whether or not long hair is tied back and staff are wearing hats as well as whether or not jewellery is being worn in the kitchen. The availability and suitability of your first aid kit, staff changing facilities and storage for personal items are also taken into account.



Temperature control

The main issue here is having your food stored at the correct temperatures. We will be checking your fridges and freezers, as well as any hot holding temperatures on the day. But that just gives us a snapshot, so we are relying on you to provide us with information to show that you know that your food is at a correct temperature everyday. Ideally we would like to see temperature monitoring records – i.e. a written record of daily temperatures. You should at least have sufficient thermometers and be aware of the temperatures in your units.

We may also ask questions to find out what steps you would be taking if you were to notice that one of your fridges for example is running too warm.

If you are storing or displaying any readily

perishable foods, such as sandwiches or sushi above 4°C, we will be asking how you are controlling the length of time food is in the danger zone and making sure that food remains safe. Again having something in writing will stand you in good stead.

When assessing this category we will also want to know how you cool batches of food, such as soups, rice and stews; how you determine that meat and poultry is cooked; how you reheat food; how you defrost food and so on.



Food protection

During the inspection we will be looking at how you are storing food to protect it from contamination – is all food in suitable containers and covered, is raw meat stored separately to cooked and ready-to-eat foods? Do you have an effective stock control system, including date marking for readily perishable foods?

Incoming goods also come under this category and we will be interested to know whether you have a list of approved suppliers and whether you inspect incoming goods.

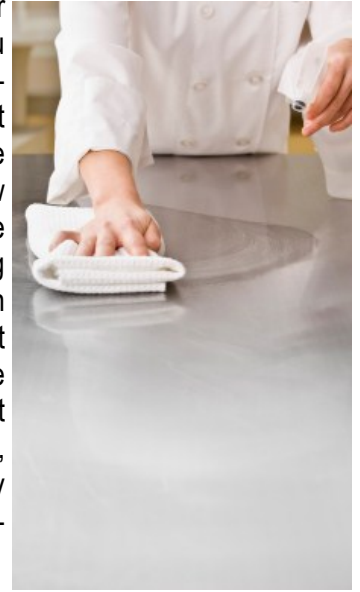
We will be assessing how you are protecting food from pests. Do you have fly screens? Are these intact? Do you have a fly light? Is it clean, working and are the UV tubes regularly changed? What do you do to prevent rodents from entering the premises? Do you have traps or bait stations and are these monitored?



Cleaning and sanitising

This category probably doesn't need too much explanation – obviously we are looking at how clean the premises is. But there is more to it than that. It is important that you are using suitable cleaning chemicals and tools. You should have appropriate, preferably commercial, cleaning chemicals for different areas, and chemicals used for food contact surfaces must be food grade. We do actually come across situations where for example a floor cleaner is being used to clean work surfaces – not a good idea!

The same goes for cloths, mops etc. You should be using separate cloths for different areas and tasks, and we will want to know how and when you are cleaning and sanitising these. Having a written cleaning schedule that lists areas to be cleaned, using what chemicals and utensils, how frequently and by whom, will be an advantage.



Structure of the premises

You don't have to have a new kitchen to be able to get high points in this category. We will assess the overall suitability of the premises for what it is being used for – is there enough space, sufficient refrigeration, are there plenty of work surfaces, can the ventilation system cope, is there a separate area where staff can store their coats, bags etc, are wash hand basins conveniently located and so on. More specifically we will be looking at the condition of the kitchen and what maintenance is being carried out or planned for the near future. For example surfaces must be smooth, easily cleanable and impervious: they do not need to be stainless steel, but damage and wear-and-tear to joinery must be regularly repaired.



Training and supervision

There is no requirement for food handlers to have formal food hygiene training, such as unit standards 167 and 168, but every food handler must have been trained to be able to carry-out his or her role hygienically and safely. We can establish an idea of the level of knowledge by observing and talking to staff, but documentation of how and when staff are trained will go a long way to show us that staff know what they are up to. We will expect supervisors to have an in depth knowledge of safe food hygiene practices, in relation to your premises.

