

## Food Safety & Food Hygiene in the Outdoors

If you plan to do regular campfire cooking or are providing food to learners at Forest School it is important you are familiar with legal requirements and good practice surrounding food.

### Legal Acts

The Food Safety Act 1990 provides the legal framework for all food legislation in England, Wales and Scotland.

The main responsibilities for all food businesses under the Act are to ensure that:

- Businesses do not include anything in food, remove anything from food or treat food in any way which means it would be damaging to the health of people eating it
- The food businesses serve or sell is of the nature, substance or quality which consumers would expect
- The food is labelled, advertised and presented in a way that is not false or misleading

The Food Standards Agency is an independent government department working across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to protect public health and consumers' wider interests in food.

### Registering as a Food Business

If you are working with a school or nursery which already regularly serves food to people (e.g. School dinners) then it is probable that the organisation is already registered as a 'food business'. It would be good practice to find out what existing policies and procedures are in place within your organisation and consider how to implement them within your Forest School programme.

If you are freelance or working within an independent Forest School business and regularly serving food within your sessions, it would be worth contacting your local authority to see if you need to register as a food business. Local authorities are responsible for enforcing food hygiene laws.

### Food Safety: Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)

HACCP is a way of managing food safety hazards. Food safety management procedures should be based on HACCP principles.

HACCP involves:

- looking closely at what you do in your business
- what could go wrong and what risks there are to food safety
- identifying any critical control points the areas a business needs to focus on to ensure those risks are removed or reduced to safe levels
- deciding what action you need to take if something goes wrong
- making sure that your procedures are being followed and are working

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- keeping records to show your procedures are working

You could consider a HACCP as a risk assessment specific to food and food handling. It is important to have food safety management procedures that are appropriate for your business.

There are three main types of food safety hazards to consider:

- microbiological - involving harmful bacteria
- chemical - involving chemical contamination
- physical - involving objects getting into food

You must develop your own procedures based on the principles of HACCP.

## Food Hygiene

Part of complying with food safety is managing food hygiene and food standards to make sure that the food you serve is safe to eat.

**Training:** By law, food business operators must ensure that food handlers receive the appropriate supervision and training in food hygiene, which is in-line with the area they work in and will enable them to handle food in the safest way. If you or your staff are regularly preparing and serving food it is worth considering undertaking a level 2 Food Hygiene course. There are some specialist training providers who can provide courses specifically for an outdoor context.

**Premises:** Depending on what you are doing you may have one or 2 premises to consider. You may be bringing bought food straight to the outdoor Forest Site (1 premises) or you might be preparing food in an indoor kitchen and then bringing it to the Forest School site (2 premises). Any premises used in food preparation need to be considered.

**The 4 C's of Food Hygiene:** The four main things to remember for good hygiene are the 4Cs:

- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Chilling
- Cross-contamination

You can use the 4Cs to prevent the most common food safety problems. You can consider them as control actions to your HACCP.

In the Outdoors considerations may include:

- Cleaning – Ensuring cleanable surfaces are used, keeping food and utensils in clean storage containers, ensure food handlers are wearing clean clothes &/or

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- aprons, ensure a separate handwashing basin is available with soap and hot and cold water, have separate sink for cleaning food items in drinking quality water
- Cooking – Ensure all food is cooked fully, use temperature probes to check higher risk foods (like meat) or only cook lower risk food (those which could be eaten raw anyway). Avoid re-heating foods.
  - Chilling – Use a good cold box to keep food cold, keep a thermometer in the cold box and monitor the temperature. Store food appropriately according to its packaging
  - Cross-contamination – Ensure no one handling food is ill, ensure hair tied back and cuts covered with bright coloured plasters, Provide adequate handwashing facilities and hand drying, Ensure food is sealed and kept in clean containers, Use different coloured chopping boards for different food items.

**Equipment & Utensils:** All items, fittings and equipment that food touches must be:

- kept in good order, repair and condition
- cleaned effectively and be disinfected frequently enough to avoid any risk of contamination

**Food Waste:** There must be adequate facilities for storing and disposing of food. Food waste and rubbish should be removed as quickly as possible to avoid it attracting pests.

The three main groups of pests that are encountered in food businesses are:

- Rodents - rats and mice
- Insects - cockroaches, beetles, ants and flies
- Birds - pigeons etc

Outdoors, all 3 of these groups of pests will be present, so being very careful to dispose of food waste quickly and carefully is essential. Try not to drop crumbs or food waste – use plates to eat snacks from and burn any crumbs and food waste in the fire. Alternately have a sealable food waste container to take back food waste to compost.

**Use-by dates:** Ensure food is not consumed, used as an ingredient or frozen beyond that date and has been stored according to instructions.

## **Food Allergens & Labelling**

By law there is a requirement for consumers to have the correct information about what is within food to be able to make informed food choices. There is also a requirement to provide accurate allergen information.

At Forest School it is important that you have good communication with parents about any allergies a learner may have as well as diet preferences (e.g. vegetarian). You may need to provide information about food being served to learners and gain parental consent.

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## **Suppliers and Record Keeping**

It is important to use a reputable supplier to ensure the products you buy have been stored, processed and handled safely. When purchasing food and ingredients do consider:

- That the packaging isn't damaged
- it is chilled or frozen – how to keep it cold enough when transporting

There are also traceability rules that help keep track of food in the supply chain and will be investigated if there was a food safety problem. You must keep records of all the suppliers that provide you with food or any food ingredients. The records should include:

- name and address of supplier
- type of and quantity of products
- dates of transaction and of delivery

## **Foraging and Wild Food**

As foraged and wild foods are not bought within a supply chain they fall into a grey area in terms of the food laws. Growing wild there is no way to measure or control what is contained within them. If you choose to consume foraged food within your Forest School programme it is vital you have appropriate risk assessments and have adequate systems in place for you to identify species accurately, be aware of any harmful look-alike species, ensure you have systems to check what other people are collecting and consuming and avoid cross contamination.

Do be aware of other legal acts that have a bearing on foraging, such as the Countryside and Wildlife Act and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. Generally speaking, if you have a legal right to be on the land then you can harvest the 4 F's for your own consumption (not to sell). The 4 F's are: Fruits, Flowers, Foliage & Fungi (It is illegal to uproot and remove a wild plant without landowners permission).

### **Some Safety Tips for foraging:**

- Be 100% sure of ID before eating anything – 'if in doubt leave it out!' Be particularly careful of young samples that might be easily confused with other things
- Harvest each plant individually (don't grab handfuls) so to not mix in inedible or harmful species, double check everything before eating or cooking
- Avoid collecting from anywhere that might be contaminated eg not along busy roads, or where dogs may pee on it!
- The first time you eat anything – only try a small amount – people have different sensitivity levels to foods and you may react even to a non-toxic species
- Only eat samples in good condition

### **Further Information:**

- UK Government: <https://www.gov.uk/food-safety-your-responsibilities>
- Food Standards Agency: <https://www.food.gov.uk/>
- My HACCP Online tool: <https://myhaccp.food.gov.uk/user/register>