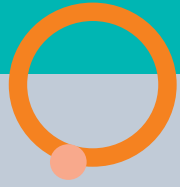


Takeaways and Meal Delivery

Food Safety Advice for
Food Businesses and Consumers



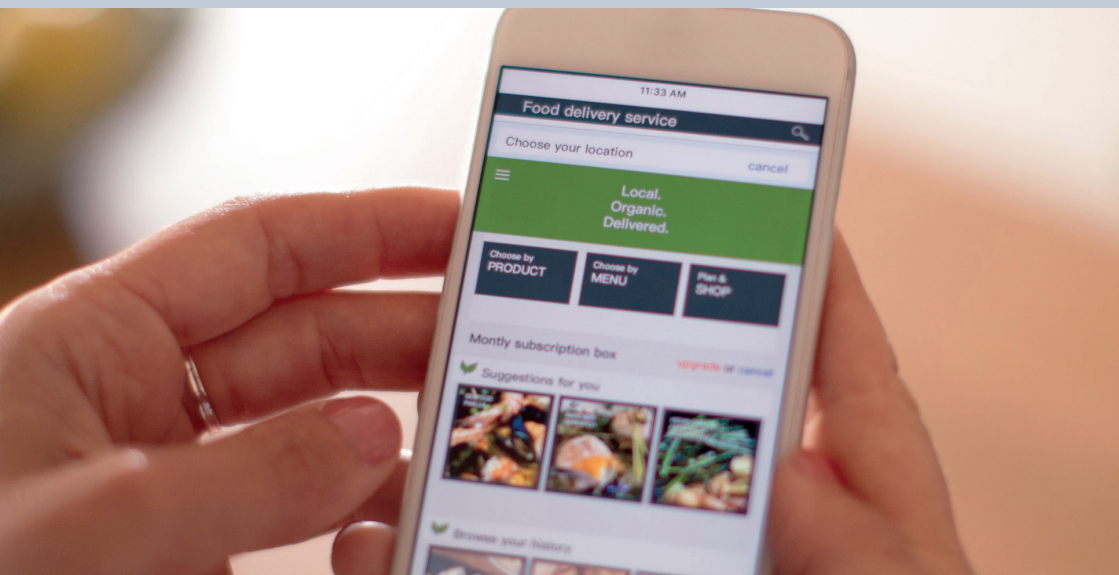
Introduction and scope



Some people choose to order takeaways and meal delivery from food premises as part of their busy lives. While food ordering apps have grown in popularity in recent years, customers can now place food orders from scattered locations using their electronic devices for courier services. No matter the meals are delivered by staff of food premises or third-party delivery agents, it is important to handle food properly from door to door for safety's sake.

This set of advice is intended for food business operators (FBOs) providing meal delivery services, including **food premises** and **third-party food delivery agents**, which prepare, pick up and deliver meals ready for consumption by customers upon arrival. It aims to assist the food trade in implementing appropriate food safety measures in their operations to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases when providing food delivery services. **In this context, third-party delivery service is generally defined as offering consumers the option to place an order from food premises within a defined geographic radius**, in contrast to other modes of direct-to-consumer food delivery such as grocery and school meal delivery services.

While this is not a legal document and its use is voluntary, it reviews some essential parameters related to Good Hygiene Practices and recommends best practices that any FBO should consider in providing safe foods to the consumers.





Common food safety problems related to takeaways and meal delivery



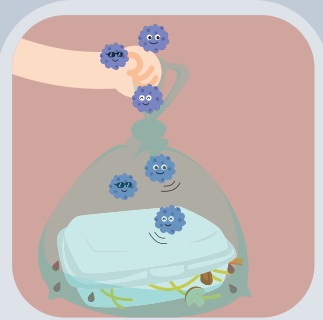
Food prepared too far in advance before picking up

- Prepared foods may not be readily picked up by food deliverers and left at room temperature for some time without proper hot/cold holding.



Improper time-temperature control during delivery

- Food is not put under any temperature control during delivery.
- Traffic, poor logistics, adverse weather or multiple orders exceeding the delivery capacity can further lengthen the delivery time without any temperature control.



Cross-contamination of food

- Contamination of food by the external environment or spillage can happen if the packaging is not properly sealed or deformed during delivery.
- Food can also become contaminated if food handlers and deliverers do not observe personal hygiene and the cleanliness of delivery vehicles.

These factors put takeaways and delivered meals at risk of prolonged exposure to the **Temperature Danger Zone between 4 to 60°C** that allows harmful bacteria in food to proliferate rapidly, as well as cross-contamination.

To reduce the risk of food poisoning, food handlers and deliverers should **keep food out of the Temperature Danger Zone** during preparation, packing, pick-up and delivery. Furthermore, food **should not be prepared too far ahead of time**. **Time-temperature control** should be in place when delivering food to consumers. Food handlers and deliverers should adhere to **good personal hygiene**, such as frequently washing hands, to prevent cross-contamination.

Safe temperatures



>60°C ≤4°C

Time-temperature control for safe meal delivery

Most disease-causing bacteria grow and multiply rapidly at the Temperature Danger Zone between 4°C and 60°C. Therefore, keeping **hot food above 60°C and cold food at or below 4°C** can secure the safety of delivery meals. Temperature control is particularly important for certain perishable high-risk foods, such as **seafood to be eaten raw, ready-to-eat processed meat or seafood (e.g. ham, sausages, smoked turkey, smoked salmon), foods containing raw or undercooked eggs, as well as mixed foods (e.g. sushi, salads, sandwiches).**



However, if food is delivered without temperature control (such as room temperature), time control becomes the only checkpoint to ensure food safety. The **'2-hour/4-hour principle'** must be followed:

Food left at room temperature for		Safe action(s)
Less than 2 hours		Prepared food can be refrigerated for final use later or used immediately.
Between 2 and 4 hours		Prepared food can no longer be refrigerated but is still safe for immediate consumption.
More than 4 hours		Prepared food should be discarded .

In other words, the longer the foods are delivered without temperature control, the less time there is for safe consumption subsequently. It is worth noting that the time for foods kept within the Temperature Danger Zone is cumulative, which means that each and every time period that the foods have been left at ambient temperature, including handling, storage and transportation, must be added up.

Example: Scrambled eggs on rice

Timing should start from finishing preparation of ready-to-eat ingredient, **but not right before delivery!**



1 Cooking scrambled egg in advance



2 Keeping without temperature control



3 Order received



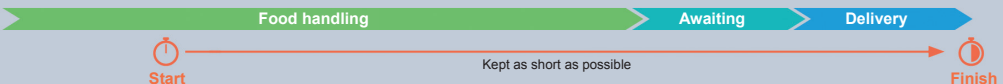
4 Placing egg on rice



5 Pending for pick up by delivery person



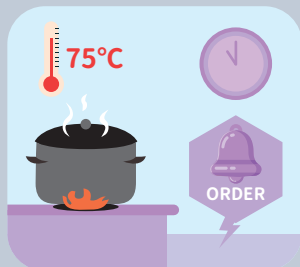
6 Transportation



Food safety measures for takeaways and meal delivery

Cooking or reheating and holding

1



For food premises

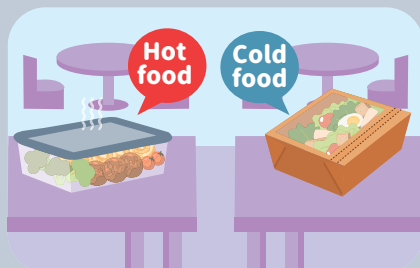
- Cook or reheat food thoroughly, with the core temperature reaching at least 75°C.
- Prepare food in time for delivery and avoid cooking too far in advance.
- Keep the food out of the Temperature Danger Zone as far as feasible before packing it for takeaways or delivery, such as keeping in a bain-marie **at above 60°C** for hot food and in the refrigerators **at or below 4°C** for cold food.

Packing and anti-tampering

2

For food premises

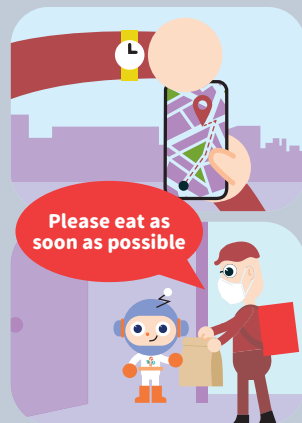
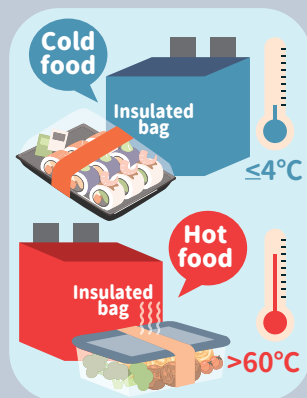
- Use clean, sturdy and heat-resistant containers with fitting coverings or sealed packaging to protect the food.
- Pack hot food and cold food in separate containers.
- Designate a staging area for picking up takeaways or delivery and keep the area clean and dry.
- Specific packaging design and tamper-evident devices can be used to prevent food tampering, such as non-resealable packaging (e.g. tear strips) and containers with tamper-evident tapes, stickers or seals to deter tampering activities and maintain food safety and integrity during transportation.
- If feasible, food preparation / packing time can be provided on the packaging.



Transportation 3

For deliverers

- All food must be untampered and delivered to consumers in a manner that prevents it from becoming unsafe or unfit to eat. Do not open, alter, tamper with or change the food and its packaging.
- Storing food in sealed containers at the proper temperature can protect it from harmful microorganisms, foreign objects and cross-contamination with other ingredients. Hot food and cold food must be transported separately in different insulated boxes or bags.
 - Cold food (such as sushi) must be kept cool while in transit. Pack cold food in an insulated bag or a bag solely for delivering cold food only with cooling gel **at or below 4°C**.
 - Hot food should be packed in an insulated bag or a warmer solely for delivering hot food only **at above 60°C**.
- Make sure the food is properly packed and positioned (e.g. upright) to avoid spillage, crushing of food or damage to food containers.
- During transportation, ready-to-eat food must be separated from raw food, and all food from non-food items.
- Avoid unnecessary ransacking to minimise the length of time that delivery items are kept out of temperature control.
- Keep records of time and temperature control for delivery items.
- Remind customers to eat the food as soon as possible.
- Bring the food to customers in person whenever possible. In other cases (e.g. when a customer asks for a no-contact drop-off), put the food in a designated, clean spot and confirm with the customer beforehand. Notify the customer upon arrival.



For third-party food delivery agents

- Verify the licence/permit of the food premises that engage in your delivery services.
- Provide clean and sturdy delivery bags and tamper-evident devices to the food premises.
- Control strictly the delivery capacity by checking the time record against any delayed deliveries.
- Incorporate and leverage technology for securing food safety, such as:
 - Providing the optimal delivery route and sequence for the food deliverers based on real-time traffic flow and capacity to shorten the delivery time.
 - Restricting food orders within a confined geographical radius to prevent long delivery times.
 - Sending notifications to consumers upon any delivery delay.
 - Keeping delivery records for tracking and tracing by health authorities in case of a foodborne disease outbreak or a food recall.
- Set up a mechanism to handle non-compliance (e.g. reported incorrect food temperatures, tampered food) and consumer complaints.

Delivery vehicles 4

For deliverers

- The storage compartments (such as trunks or tail boxes) of the vehicles for transporting food and delivery containers should be:
 - cleaned by sanitisers, disinfectants or liquid soap thoroughly before and after each delivery;
 - maintained in good conditions;
 - capable of keeping food at the proper temperature; and
 - equipped with thermometers for validating food temperature control measures.
- Storage compartments or containers used for the delivery of food or meals should be adequately cleansed for each use before commencing the delivery work.



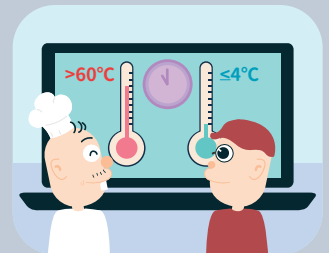
Personal hygiene 5

- Always follow good personal hygiene practices, which include proper handwashing. Wash hands thoroughly, rubbing with warm soapy water for 20 seconds, before and after handling foods or after using toilets, coughing, sneezing or nose-blowing etc.
- For deliverers, if no hand washing facilities are available and their hands are not visibly dirty, use alcohol-based hand sanitisers instead.
- Food handlers and deliverers should stop working if they have symptoms such as abdominal pain, diarrhoea, fever, sore throat or vomiting.

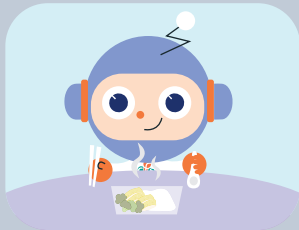


Training 6

- All FBO staff should be trained on basic food safety principles, including **Good Hygiene Practices, contamination prevention, tampering prevention and time-temperature management.**



Advice to consumers



- Consumers are advised to eat takeaways and delivered meals as soon as feasible. Alternatively, they could store them in the refrigerator temporarily upon receiving and reheat it thoroughly before consumption.
- Pick up the food as soon as possible and eat it after confirming with the deliverer that it is temporarily placed in the designated spot.
- If the food is unsanitary or contains substances not suitable for human consumption, you can call the 24-hour hotline 2868 0000 to lodge a complaint with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and keep the food exhibit for follow-up.
- As some takeaway packaging materials cannot withstand high temperatures (e.g. 100°C), if reheating is required, pour the food into a heat-resistant container before heat treatment.
- High-risk delivery foods, such as raw or semi-cooked food like sushi with no proper temperature control, should be avoided, particularly for susceptible populations.
- Meals that need to be transported over a long distance are prone to spoilage and contamination if there is no strict control over time and temperature. Consumers should refrain from ordering them.

