

# Bulk foods

## Goal

The safe and hygienic storage, handling, display, repackaging or customer-packaging of bulk foods.

Act requirements:

- Food must be produced or processed and handled in ways that minimise the contamination or deterioration of food and prevent food containing substances that are unexpected or unreasonable.
- There must be procedures for controlling hazards at each production and processing and handling step where it is essential to eliminate or reduce a hazard to an acceptable level.
- Food must be safe and suitable.

## How this is done

Surfaces and equipment used for preparing food must be in sound condition and clean before use. Surfaces in contact with ready-to-eat foods must be sanitised before use - see *Cleaning and Equipment, packaging and other items, Food Allergens*.

Good hand hygiene and personal hygiene practices must be followed – see *Hand hygiene and Personal hygiene*.

Stocks of bulk foods must be stored and handled hygienically. Food in opened packaging must be protected from contamination – see *Potentially hazardous foods, Perishable and shelf-stable foods*.

### Restocking

- Before restocking containers, new product must be checked to ensure that there are no signs of pests.
- Re-stocking (e.g. of display containers) must be carried out hygienically and ensure that the oldest stock (that is still within any date coding) is used first.



It is recommended that top filling is not done. i.e. containers should be emptied where possible before refilling.

- After restocking, food in display containers must be protected from contamination (e.g. lid or cover is replaced).
- Opened packs of product that will be used to replenish display containers at a later time must be protected from contamination and returned to storage. They must be marked with the date the packaging was opened and must be sold so that it meets the shelf-life date that has been calculated for it once it has been taken from the manufacturers packaging – See *Calculating shelf life*.

### Bulk foods containing allergens

To prevent foods that do not contain allergens from becoming contaminated by foods that contain allergens:

- Keep foods that contain allergens separate from those that do not contain allergens (e.g. don't store/display foods containing allergens above or in contact with foods that do not).
- Keep foods apart that look similar if one contains an allergen and the other does not.

## Why?

- Bulk foods can become contaminated with harmful microbes from unclean utensils and hands e.g. when a quantity is removed for making food or during customer self-selection.
- Objects can fall into poorly protected bulk foods (e.g. poorly-fitting or missing covers to containers)
- Poor storage of bulk items can encourage pests.

## How this is done

- When taking food from a bulk container or restocking display containers, minimise airborne carry-over of fine/powdered foods.

See *Food Allergens* and *Cleaning & Sanitising Customer self-service and packaging from bulk displays*.

Bulk displays must be set up to minimise possible stock contamination by self-service customers.

- All displays of bulk food must:
  - be stored off the floor;
  - be protected from contamination.
- Customers must be able to identify what is in a bulk food display before exposing the food to the risk of contamination (e.g. before the customer takes a lid off a container).
- Customers must be able to handle food hygienically:
  - Clean utensils (e.g. scoops/tongs) must be provided to each bin for customers to handle food.
  - Utensils used for food must be able to be stored hygienically between use.
  - Clean bags/containers must be available for customers to wrap food (unless customers bring their own containers).
- A member of staff regularly checks that:
  - bulk foods are protected from contamination (e.g. lids/ covers are in place);
  - a clean utensil is available for each food;
  - utensils are properly stored between use;
  - dropped/dirty utensils are removed and replaced with a clean one;
  - any spillage is cleaned-up promptly.

## What if there is a problem?

If equipment is not clean, clean it before use and review *Cleaning and Training & Supervision* procedures.

If utensils are dirty or not stored hygienically for use, find out why and take action to prevent it from happening again.

Retrain staff as appropriate.

If there are signs that pests may have contaminated the food, do not use the food. Find out the extent of the problem and eliminate pests. Identify the source of the pests and take action to ensure that the situation doesn't recur. See *Pest control*.

If product is not within any date code, do not use. Throw it away.

## Write it down

You must write down (in the Cleaning schedule) the surfaces and equipment that need to be cleaned and sanitised, when and how this is done, and by whom.

You must write down (e.g. in the Diary) any problems that occurred and what you did to prevent them from happening again. Also write down any matters that might need following up (e.g. training, review cleaning schedule etc).

Write (e.g. in the Diary) any items that you have had to throw away, and why.



### **Pests**

*Pests may contaminate food in storage, especially if there's poor attention to regular cleaning and clearing-up spilled food. Three common pests are:*

*Flour beetles are very small with a sticky outer covering that food particles stick to. Beetles mainly infest grains, including, but not limited to: cereal, corn meal oats, rice, flour, and crackers. It is the most abundant insect pest of flour mills and once in flour can give a sharp odour or mouldy flavour.*

*Meal moths can infest a variety of foods including coarsely ground grains, cereals, dried fruits, and herb. They've also been found in animal food such as dried dog food and bird seed. The adult moth is small; with grayish, dirty complexion. The larval stage is centered on food sources and can chew through plastic packaging. It will produce silk that loosely binds to food fragments. The pupal stage can be found as tiny cocoons that hang from the ceiling, on walls and near the food source.*

*The sawtoothed grain beetle is commonly found feeding on items such as cereal, breakfast foods, dried fruits, macaroni, crackers, etc. They are small, active insects, with jaws that allow them to easily break through well sealed and packaged foods. The larvae use pieces of food to form a protective covering around their bodies.*

*See - Pests and animal control.*