



Food Safety in the Outdoors

In the UK there is a basic standard of training required by Law for organisations that provide food to people. Although this generally refers to restaurants and eateries that sell food to the general public or schools that provide food for students, it is also considered best practice that if you are providing food for consumption by participants, students, children that it will be done in a way that ensures people don't come to any harm as a result of food that has been cooked or otherwise provided.

If a person or people become unwell as a result of eating food that is not fit for human consumption then the person or organisation that has provided this could be investigated and prosecuted for being negligent which could result in a heavy fine or imprisonment .

The rules are generally simple and straightforward and nearly all are common sense.

Food hygiene

As a food handler it is important that you maintain the highest standard of cleanliness and hygiene at all times. **Hand washing is probably the most important thing to remember.**

High risk foods: These are generally those intended to be eaten without any further cooking (which would destroy harmful food poisoning bacteria). High risk foods tend to be proteins such as cooked meat, fish and poultry, eggs and dairy based foods such as cheese and milk. These foods should be kept separate from raw and uncooked meat, poultry and fish.

When cooking meat, fish and poultry ensure that it is thoroughly cooked through before serving it up. These foods can easily look cooked on the outside without being fully cooked on the inside especially if they are cooked from frozen. It is better to eat cooked food hot, straight from cooking and not reheated.

When preparing foods it is important that separate chopping boards are used for preparing raw foods, cooked foods and vegetables to avoid contamination. If this is not possible then ensure that the chopping boards and other equipment used is washed in hot soapy water.

Remember that food contaminated by food poisoning bacteria usually looks, smells and tastes completely normal.

Storage of food: Just as at home in the refrigerator, it is important that high risk foods are kept cool and 'in' date to avoid spoilage and this is normally achieved by using a cool box or bag with ice blocks and checking the 'use by' date on the packaging. Remember that in the sunshine these can thaw very quickly and become warm which will in turn become a breeding ground for harmful food poisoning bacteria.

When using wood gathered from the woodland for cooking or preparing food ensure that the wood is green (fresh), peeled and especially from a **non toxic tree**. In the UK this tends to be hazel, sycamore, birch and willow.

Trees such as yew, laurel and rhododendron are known to be toxic and can cause serious harm, even death so if you are not 100% sure it's safe to use then don't use it! (Research what is non-toxic in your local area).

Allergies and food intolerances: Food allergies and intolerances are becoming much more common in recent times and it is vital that we check with parents, schools and people within our group if there is anything we need to be aware of before we provide them with any food.

Food preparation should not be done by anyone suffering from sickness and or diarrhoea.

This is just a general guide. For more information check out fact sheet: FS320003 Food Safety in Scouting.

Please refer to local/relevant guidelines/regulations before cooking at Forest school.