Food Preparation & Storage Practices

**Receiving food**

Keeping food safe starts from the moment that the food arrives:

* Check that your food suppliers are supplying safe food.
* Ensure that perishable food arrives in a refrigerated food vehicle, and check the temperature of deliveries when they arrive. Then transfer to the correct type of storage.
* Dry goods, dry ingredients or canned foods should be in good condition, without torn packaging or heavily dented cans.

**Preparing food**

* Use separate utensils, including cutting boards and knives, for raw food and cooked food. If this is not possible, thoroughly wash and sanitise equipment before using it.
* Wash all fruit and vegetables in clean water before using them.
* Don’t use food from damaged packaging.
* Don’t let raw food come into contact with cooked food to avoid cross contamination.

**Handling food**

* Cooked, or ready-to-eat food shouldn’t be handled with bare hands. Use tongs, spatulas, spoons, or disposable gloves.
* Raw food to be cooked can be handled with bare hands.
* Change disposable gloves every hour and/or when they tear and/or when you change tasks.

**Coo**ki**ng** a**n**d **h**eati**ng**

* Thaw frozen food before cooking in microwave or at the bottom of the refrigerator.
* Never put thawed food back in the freezer.
* Cook thawed food immediately after thawing.
* Cook all foods completely, especially red meat, fish and chicken.
* Reheating: bring to the boil and simmer for a minimum of 5 minutes before serving (or microwave using manufacturer’s guidelines).

**Storing food**

* Temperature: meat, dairy or fish (not already processed by heat) are high-risk foods. Store at the correct temperature, frozen (hard) at -15ºC or cooler or refrigerated at 5ºC or cooler.
* Time: Don’t keep food in storage for too long. Record dates, ‘first in - first out’ rule. Food should be out of refrigeration for a maximum of four hours.

**Displaying food**

* Wrap or cover all food on display. Tag or label food trays, not the food.
* Refrigerated displays must be 5ºC or cooler and hot displays 60ºC or hotter.
* Don’t use hot display equipment to reheat food.

**Transporting food**

* Keep cold by using insulated containers such as an Esky with ice or cold blocks.
* Food which is to be served hot should be transported cold and heated at the event.

For more information, training and posters on food safety go to: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/bus/keeping.htm> or <http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/peh/food_safety>