



COURSE MANUAL

High-Risk Food Handler

Food hygiene and safety training in line with Regulation (EC) 853/2004 · 10 hours ·
10 units

Social Chef Formación

Course with a qualified tutor · Questions on WhatsApp
hola@socialchefformacion.com · socialchefformacion.com

the exam and the certificate are obtained on the website.

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How to use this manual: read the units in order; each one takes 10 to 15 minutes. At the end of each unit you will find a key idea. When you finish, take the exam on the website (10 questions, one per unit; you pass with 8 correct answers). If you pass, you can request your Certificate + Card.

UNIT 1 OF 10

The food handler and the law

A **food handler** is any person who, because of their job, has direct contact with food during its preparation, manufacture, processing, packaging, storage, transport, distribution, sale, supply or service. Cooks, waiters, shelf stackers, delivery riders, school canteen monitors or bakery staff are all food handlers.

The rules that apply

- **Regulation (EC) 852/2004** on the hygiene of foodstuffs: the basic European rule. It obliges businesses to apply procedures based on the HACCP system and to make sure their food handlers receive hygiene training suited to their work.
- **Regulation (EC) 178/2002**: general principles of food safety and the traceability obligation.
- **Royal Decree 109/2010**: repealed the old Royal Decree 202/2000 and, with it, the "food handler card" issued by the authorities. Since then there is no official card: the food business is responsible for training its handlers.
- **Royal Decree 1021/2022**: hygiene requirements in food retail.
- **Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 and Royal Decree 126/2015**: consumer information and allergens.
- **Law 1/2025**: prevention of food loss and waste.

The business's obligations

Draw up and apply a training plan for its staff, implement a self-control system (HACCP), keep records and guarantee the traceability of food. In a health inspection, the business must be able to prove that its workers have received food hygiene training: this certificate is the documentary proof the business keeps.

The food handler's obligations

- Receive training and apply it day to day.
- Follow the personal hygiene rules.
- Tell the person in charge about any illness that could be passed on through food (vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, skin infections).
- Provide documentary proof of their training when asked.

Key idea: food handler training must be ongoing and suited to the job. Although the law sets no expiry date, renewing it every 4 years, or when you change activity, is recommended.

UNIT 2 OF 10

Hazards and food contamination

Food is **contaminated** when it contains substances or micro-organisms that can spoil it or pose a health risk to whoever eats it. It can be contaminated without any change in its appearance, smell or taste.

Types of hazard

- **Biological:** bacteria (Salmonella, Listeria, E. coli...), viruses (norovirus, hepatitis A), parasites (anisakis) and moulds. They are the most frequent cause of food poisoning.
- **Chemical:** traces of cleaning products, pesticides, metals, degraded oils, undeclared allergens.
- **Physical:** glass, metal, bones, fish bones, hair, plastic, pieces of packaging.

How contamination happens

- **At source:** the food is already contaminated when it arrives (soil, water, animals).
- **Cross-contamination:** micro-organisms pass from one food, usually raw, to another that is ready to eat. It can be direct (contact between foods or dripping in the fridge) or indirect (hands, boards, knives, cloths, surfaces).
- **Through the handler:** dirty hands, coughing over food, wounds, street clothes.

What bacteria need to multiply

Nutrients, moisture, time and, above all, **temperature**. Between **5 °C and 65 °C** (the "danger zone") bacteria multiply quickly; in favourable conditions one bacterium can become millions in a few hours. Below 5 °C their growth slows down; above 65 °C they start to be destroyed.

High-risk foods

Meat and poultry, fish and shellfish, eggs and egg-based sauces, milk and dairy products, cooked dishes, cooked rice and pasta, sprouts and ready-to-eat products. With these, time and temperature control must be stricter than ever.

Golden rule: keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Food must not stay in the danger zone any longer than strictly necessary.

UNIT 3 OF 10

Foodborne illnesses

Foodborne illnesses are caused by eating contaminated food. We distinguish **infections** (the living micro-organism reaches the body and multiplies), **intoxications** (what makes you ill is the toxin the micro-organism produced in the food, even if the food has since been cooked) and **toxi-infections** (a mix of both).

The most common ones

- **Salmonella:** eggs and sauces made with raw egg, poultry, undercooked meat. Fever, diarrhoea and vomiting 6 to 72 hours later.
- **Staphylococcus aureus:** lives in the handler's nose, throat, skin and wounds. It contaminates heavily handled foods (creams, potato salads, sandwiches). Its toxin withstands heat.
- **Listeria:** grows even in the cold; cured meats, raw-milk cheeses, smoked products and chilled ready-to-eat dishes. Very dangerous for pregnant women, the elderly and immunocompromised people.
- **Escherichia coli:** undercooked minced meat, raw milk, poorly washed vegetables.
- **Campylobacter:** raw chicken and cross-contamination in the kitchen.
- **Clostridium botulinum:** badly sterilised home preserves; its toxin is very serious.
- **Bacillus cereus:** cooked rice or pasta left at room temperature.
- **Anisakis:** a fish parasite. Prevented by cooking fish right through or freezing it before eating it raw or lightly cooked (marinated anchovies, sushi, ceviche).
- **Norovirus and hepatitis A:** a sick handler, contaminated water or shellfish.

Vulnerable people

Children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with weak immune systems suffer more serious consequences. In school canteens, care homes and hospitals, control must be at its strictest.

If the handler is ill

With vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, infected wounds or skin lesions: **tell the person in charge, do not handle food and see a doctor.** Never "push through" with medication while carrying on working with food.

UNIT 4 OF 10

Personal hygiene and the handler's habits

The food handler is both the main barrier against contamination and its main source. Their habits make the difference.

Hand washing

When: when starting work and after a break, after using the toilet, after touching raw food, rubbish, money, your phone or your face, after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose, when changing task and before touching ready-to-eat food.

How: with hot water and soap, rubbing palms, backs, between the fingers, nails and wrists for 40-60 seconds; rinse and dry with **single-use paper** or an air dryer, never with a kitchen cloth or your clothes.

Clothing and appearance

- Work clothes used only for work, clean, changed often and preferably light-coloured; put on when you arrive and never worn in the street.
- A cap or hairnet that covers all your hair; closed, non-slip footwear.
- No rings, bracelets, watches or earrings; nails short, clean, unpainted and no false nails.
- Beard covered or trimmed; no strong perfumes.

Wounds and gloves

Any wound on the hands is covered with a waterproof, visibly coloured (blue) plaster and a glove on top. Gloves **do not replace hand washing**: use them clean, change them when you change task and throw them away when you finish.

Habits forbidden while handling food

- Eating, drinking, smoking or chewing gum in the work area.
- Coughing or sneezing over food; touching your nose, mouth or hair.
- Tasting food with your fingers or with the same spoon several times.
- Using your phone in the preparation area without washing your hands afterwards.

Remember: clean hands prevent more food poisoning than any disinfectant.

UNIT 5 OF 10

Receiving, storage and transport

Receiving goods

When a delivery arrives, check the **temperature** (chilled at 5 °C or below, frozen at –18 °C or below), the **condition of the packaging** (no dents, bulges or tears), the **labelling** (name, batch, dates, allergens) and the cleanliness of the vehicle. Anything that does not comply is rejected and recorded.

Dates

- **Use-by date** ("use by..."): highly perishable foods. After the date the food may not be safe and **must not be eaten**.
- **Best-before date** ("best before..."): shows until when the food keeps all its qualities. After the date it may still be safe if it has been stored properly, even if it has lost flavour or texture.

Storage

- **Dry store**: a cool, ventilated, clean place; products more than 10 cm off the floor and away from the wall; no contact with cleaning products.
- **Refrigeration**: between 0 and 5 °C, with a visible thermometer. Raw separated from cooked; if they share a fridge, cooked food on top and raw underneath, everything covered and labelled.
- **Freezing**: –18 °C or below. Do not overload the freezers or open them more than necessary.
- **FIFO rotation**: first in, first out. Put new stock at the back.
- **Opened products**: transfer tinned food to suitable containers with lids, label with the opening date and refrigerate. Semi-preserved (anchovies) always need refrigeration.

Transport

Clean vehicles and, where needed, refrigerated; keep the cold chain; do not transport food together with non-food or cleaning products; protect food from sun and dust.

Records: writing down the fridge and freezer temperatures every day is part of self-control and the proof for the health authorities that the cold chain is being monitored.

UNIT 6 OF 10

Preparation, cooking and preservation

Defrosting

Always in the fridge, in a container that collects the liquid and on the bottom shelf; or in the microwave if the food is cooked straight away. **Never at room temperature or in hot water.** Defrosted food is never refrozen raw.

Cooking

Heat destroys most micro-organisms if it reaches the centre of the food. As a rule, the core must reach **at least 70 °C**; for poultry and minced meat 75 °C is recommended. A probe thermometer is the best tool in the kitchen.

Holding and cooling

- Food served hot is kept at **65 °C or above** (bain-marie, hot holding units).
- Food that will be stored chilled is cooled **as fast as possible** (blast chiller, shallow containers, cold-water bath) and refrigerated covered and labelled with the date; it is never left to cool overnight at room temperature.
- Reheat **only once** and to at least 70 °C; whatever is left after reheating is thrown away.

Special cases

- **Eggs and egg-based sauces** (mayonnaise, aioli): in catering they are made with pasteurised egg products or heated to 70 °C; kept chilled and used within 24 hours.
- **Raw or lightly cooked fish**: freeze beforehand to prevent anisakis.
- **Frying oil**: filter it, do not exceed 180 °C and replace it when it is dark, foamy or smoking.
- **Water and ice**: drinking water only; clean ice machines with a dedicated scoop.
- **Fruit and vegetables**: wash under the tap and, if eaten raw in mass catering, disinfect with an approved product.

Order of work: first clean, ready-to-eat items, then raw ones; never the other way round without cleaning and disinfecting in between.

UNIT 7 OF 10

Cleaning, disinfection and pest control

Cleaning is not disinfecting

Cleaning removes visible dirt (food residues, grease, dust) with water and detergent. **Disinfecting** removes micro-organisms with a disinfectant product or with heat. Disinfection does not work on a dirty surface: first clean, rinse and then disinfect, respecting the contact time stated on the product, and rinse again where required.

The cleaning and disinfection plan

Every establishment must have in writing **what** is cleaned, **how**, **when**, **with which** product and dose, and **who** does it, plus a record that it has been done. Floors, walls and ceilings are cleaned when no food is being handled.

Products and utensils

- Products approved for food use, kept in a separate place, identified and **in their original container**; never in water bottles or next to food.
- Single-use cloths or cloths washed daily; scourers and wipes replaced frequently.
- Colour-coded chopping boards (red raw meat, blue fish, green vegetables, yellow poultry, white cooked food) and clean knives between tasks.
- Fridges, extractor hoods, filters and drains included in the plan.

Waste

Bins with lids and pedals, lined with bags, away from the preparation areas and emptied often; used oil goes to an authorised waste manager; clean and disinfect the bins daily.

Pests

Insects and rodents spread disease. The best defence is **prevention**: insect screens, closed doors, no cracks or gaps, covered food, controlled rubbish and tidiness. If they appear, call an **authorised pest control company**; the food handler does not apply insecticides on their own in the kitchen.

Quick check: is it written down, is it followed and is it recorded? If one of the three is missing, the plan is useless in an inspection.

UNIT 8 OF 10

Self-control: the HACCP system and traceability

What HACCP is

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points is the self-control system that Regulation (EC) 853/2004 requires from every food business. It consists of analysing which hazards can appear at each stage of the work, deciding at which points they can be controlled and checking that they are. In small establishments it can be applied in a simplified way through guides to good hygiene practice.

The prerequisites

Before HACCP, the basics must be in place: drinking water, a cleaning and disinfection plan, pest control, staff training, supplier control, traceability, maintenance of premises and equipment, and waste management.

The seven principles

1. Identify the hazards at each stage.
2. Determine the **critical control points** (CCPs): stages where control is essential to prevent or eliminate a hazard (for example, the cooking temperature or the fridge temperature).
3. Set critical limits (for example, "the centre of the product reaches 70 °C").
4. Monitor the CCPs (measure, observe, record).
5. Establish corrective actions for when a limit is exceeded.
6. Verify that the system works.
7. Document everything: records of temperatures, cleaning, suppliers, training, incidents.

Traceability

It is the ability to follow a food **one step back** (who it came from) and **one step forward** (who it was sold to). It makes it possible to withdraw a product quickly if there is a problem. It is achieved by keeping delivery notes and labels with the batch number, and noting which customer is served in the case of distribution.

What the health inspector asks for in practice: temperature records, the cleaning plan and its records, delivery notes and suppliers, staff training certificates and, where applicable, allergen sheets. All up to date and to hand.

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Allergens and consumer information

Allergy, intolerance and coeliac disease

An **allergy** is a reaction of the immune system; it can appear with tiny amounts and can be fatal (anaphylaxis). An **intolerance** is a digestive problem (for example, to lactose), unpleasant but not immune-related. **Coeliac disease** is an autoimmune disease triggered by gluten that damages the intestine.

The 14 allergens that must be declared

According to Annex II of Regulation (EU) 1169/2011: cereals containing **gluten**, **crustaceans**, **eggs**, **fish**, **peanuts**, **soya**, **milk** (including lactose), **tree nuts** (almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pistachios...), **celery**, **mustard**, **sesame**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites**, **lupin** and **molluscs**.

The duty to inform

Packaged foods must highlight allergens in the list of ingredients. In bars, restaurants, canteens, bakeries and shops selling loose food (**Royal Decree 126/2015**) the information must be available in writing on the menu, on a sign or in sheets; it may be given verbally only if the customer can also consult it in writing and this is indicated.

In the kitchen

- Know the exact composition of every dish and keep recipe sheets up to date.
- Avoid **cross-contamination**: clean or dedicated utensils, boards and surfaces; prepare allergen-free dishes first or separately; do not use the same frying oil; store allergenic ingredients closed and identified.
- Never "remove" the allergen from a dish that is already made: traces remain.
- If in doubt, tell the customer the truth: it is better not to serve the dish.

If a customer has a reaction

Call 112 immediately, do not leave the person alone, ask whether they carry an adrenaline auto-injector and help them use it, and keep the dish for analysis. Afterwards, record the incident and review the process.

UNIT 10 OF 10

Preventing food loss and waste

What Law 1/2025 says

Law 1/2025 on the prevention of food loss and waste obliges businesses in the food chain, including hotels, bars and restaurants, to have a **waste prevention plan** and to apply a **hierarchy of priorities** for food that is not sold or not eaten.

The hierarchy of priorities

1. **Human consumption:** make use of the food (process it, reuse it) and, if not, donate it to social organisations.
2. Processing into other products (juices, jams...).
3. Animal feed and feed manufacturing.
4. Industrial uses (compost, biofuels).
5. As a last resort, disposal as waste.

Obligations in bars, restaurants and canteens

- Allow customers to take away what they have not eaten, at no extra cost and in suitable containers (except in all-you-can-eat buffets), and inform them of this visibly.
- Have the prevention plan and work with donation organisations whenever possible.
- Train staff in good practices to reduce waste.

Good practice in the kitchen

- Buy according to real consumption and rotate the store (FIFO).
- Keep an eye on dates and use first what expires first.
- Adjust portions and offer half portions.
- Use trimmings and leftovers in new preparations, always safely.
- Measure how much is thrown away and why: what is not measured cannot be improved.

Food safety and donation

Donating or reusing food can never break the rules of the previous units: keep the cold chain, respect use-by dates, label and record. Donated food has to be as safe as food that is sold.

This is the end of the course. You can now take the exam: 10 questions, one per unit. If you do not pass, you can retake it as many times as you like.