Section 3, Operations

In this section, you will be introduced to these issues, for example:

- What must the surfaces of your establishment's workbenches and work areas be like?
- What materials are permitted in dishes, tools and food packaging?
- How will you ensure the safety of water?
- What should be taken into account when buying raw materials?
- Why do you need to know the origin of raw materials and destination of finished products?
- What information must be stated on food packages?
- What should be taken into consideration when transporting food?

Cleaning and cleanliness of surfaces and equipment

The surface materials of the facilities, utensils and appliances must be non-toxic and easy to clean. If necessary, such as in food-processing premises, the materials must be able to withstand washing with water and mechanical cleaning, such as with a brush.

Materials that do not have a smooth, water-repellent and hard surface absorb dirt and odours and cannot be kept clean in practice. Such materials are not suitable for food preparation, processing or storage facilities, in which cleanliness is particularly important.

Broken and rusty surfaces are also difficult to clean. This is why you should favour durable and rustproof materials. The condition of the surfaces must be monitored and broken surfaces repaired or replaced.

The use of wood in establishments handling meat

Avoid the use of wood as a surface material in areas where meat is handled.
Wood cannot endure frequent washing.

Do not use wooden cutting boards in establishments in which meat is handled. Plastic cutting boards should be replaced or ground smooth when grooves appear.

Wooden pallets should not be taken into meat-handling areas.

Cleaning the premises

Premises, devices and utensils used in food production must be cleaned carefully, at least at the end of each day or shift. If necessary, the premises must also be disinfected.
Cleanliness must be ensured before starting work.

Keep surfaces and utensils that come into contact with food as clean as possible during the working day.

Food-processing areas, equipment and utensils must always be cleaned in a manner that does not damage the food. This means, for example, that premises may not be washed when they contain food. If the premises contain empty food storage containers, these must be carefully covered for the duration of washing.

Only use clean cleaning equipment
Cleaning equipment must be cleaned or changed frequently enough. If this is neglected, they will spread dirt, bacteria and viruses between surfaces.

Dedicated cleaning equipment for premises in which food is prepared or processed
Food preparation and processing premises need their own cleaning equipment. The equipment may not be used to clean other premises. This prevents the spread of bacteria and viruses that cause food poisoning through the cleaning equipment. Toilet facilities also require their own cleaning equipment.

Label your cleaning equipment
It is a good idea to label cleaning equipment with its purpose and area of use. In this way, the equipment for different premises and surfaces will not get mixed up. For example, the use of different-coloured cleaning equipment for different purposes is a common method.

Do not forget the ceiling and other high surfaces
Dirt, harmful bacteria and viruses may contaminate unprotected foodstuffs and processing surfaces from many places and for many reasons.

Dirt, bacteria, and viruses may originate from, for example,

- human hands
- the air, or
- high surfaces, such as the ceiling or shelves with flaky paint or mould.

For this reason, unprotected food should not be processed in premises whose high surfaces are in poor condition.

Sufficiently effective ventilation
The ventilation in food premises must be powerful enough to prevent humidity from accumulating in the structures, leading to the growth of mould.

Mould can easily enter foodstuffs, either directly or via the processing surfaces. Dripping moisture from roof structures can contaminate food and processing surfaces.

Efficient ventilation also removes heat, which is important for the operation of refrigeration equipment.

Different activities require different kinds of ventilation. You can ask the building supervision authority for more information.

Dehumidification
Water frequently condenses on the cold surfaces and refrigeration equipment of refrigerated areas. This is called condensed water or condensation. The dripping of condensation into food must be prevented, for example with condensation basins and drainage pipes. Alternatively, the surfaces must be dried often enough to prevent water from dripping. Moisture left by washing must also be prevented from dripping into food.

Design and maintenance of ventilation equipment
Ventilation systems must be designed with easy access to filters and other parts that require cleaning or replacement.

Ventilation equipment must be kept clean and serviced on a regular basis.

Prevent the following contamination risks:

1. Design the ventilation so that the air from unclean areas will not flow into areas in which food is handled. Unclean areas include, for example, by-product and waste storage areas.
2. Also design your plumbing so that it will not cause a risk of contamination to foodstuffs. For example, the washing water from unclean areas must not flow into areas in which foodstuffs are handled.

Pests must be kept from food premises
Pests, such as rats, mice, cockroaches, flies and silverfish bring dirt, bacteria and viruses with them. It is important to prevent pests from entering premises where food is processed. The dirt, bacteria and viruses carried by pests frequently originate from outside or from the sewers. They can cause food poisoning if allowed to contaminate foodstuffs.

Materials suitable for use with food

All materials coming into contact with food must be suitable for use with food and for their intended purpose. This ensures that harmful chemicals will not migrate from the materials into the food.

In the industry, we talk about 'contact materials'. This refers to all materials that come into contact with foodstuffs, such as work surfaces, dishes, utensils, appliances and packaging materials.

How do I know whether a material is suitable for use with food?
You need to confirm the materials' suitability for use with food. In the first instance, you should ask the material, device or goods supplier for compliance documentation. Such documents include, for example, a certificate of suitability for use with food or declaration of conformity. The above-mentioned documents are normally not available for older devices, and you must ensure their suitability through other means. For metal parts, for example, it is sufficient to know the type of steel used and the device's maintenance history.

For utensils such as knives and ladles, the wine glass and fork symbol is normally sufficient proof of suitability for use with foodstuffs.

In small-scale operations that purchase their materials and supplies from a wholesaler, it is sufficient that the purpose of use of the material or article is indicated in the trade name, such as "barbeque bag", "meat wrapper" or "marinade bowl".

Wine glass and fork symnbol

What other, specific restrictions have been issued?
The use of a material can be subject to further restrictions regarding, for example, the temperature, fat content, acidity or usability period of the food. Information on such restrictions is found in the compliance documents or package markings of the article.

What will I do if a product's purpose is not indicated by its packaging or instructions?
If the purpose or conditions of use are not clear, you should always confirm the matter with the material, device or goods supplier. In this case, for example, additional information obtained by e-mail can be sufficient.

If you buy your materials/articles directly from manufacturers or importers, request them to provide compliance documents that include instructions.

Especially fat content, heat and acidity can contribute to the migrate transfer of harmful chemicals from materials to foodstuffs. For this reason, it is important to use materials according to instructions and only for the purposes for which they are intended.

Protect foodstuffs from aluminium
Do not use aluminium dishes to store acidic foods, such as a lemon marinade. Do not use aluminium dishes with steel utensils, since steel scrapes off aluminium, which then migrates into the food stored in the dish. Aluminium foil may not be used to protect steel dishes because the steel will make holes in the aluminium, leaving traces of it in the food.

Opened tins
When you have opened a metal tin, transfer the contents to another container for storage.
Why?
An opened tin will come into contact with oxygen. That can cause tin or other metals to come off into the food.

Choose appropriate disposable gloves
Vinyl plastic disposable gloves are not always suitable for the processing of fatty foods. Regular vinyl gloves, for example, are thus not suitable as general-purpose gloves for working with food. If the glove package does not indicate which foods the gloves can be used with, confirm this from the supplier.

Water source

Most establishments use water from the public utility network in their operations. The waterworks monitor the quality of public water. However, establishments that handle meat are also required to take water samples themselves.

Evira has issued recommendations on the number of samples and types of analyses. More samples are required if you use water from your own well or another water source or install water filters on taps.

Non-potable water must be kept separate from drinking water
If your establishment uses water from a source other than the public utility network for purposes such as fire-fighting, vapour production or cooling, this water must circulate in a separate, marked system.

Non-potable water must not be connected to the public utility network or be allowed to flow back into it.

Purchasing ingredients and accepting deliveries

Be prepared to check accepted raw material deliveries at the intervals specified in your own-check plan. You should keep track of the reliability of deliveries and, especially, the temperature of the cargo.

When a delivery arrives, it is extremely sensible to unload raw materials directly into cold storage and frozen products into a freezer. In this way, the cold chain will not be broken.

Also remember to ensure that the information on the products matches the information contained in the documents.

Purchasing meat for cutting
The meat used at your establishment must be inspected at a slaughterhouse or game processing facility.

You must conduct an acceptance inspection of the carcasses. In the inspection, you check that the carcasses are clean and their temperatures are as required.

As a rule, the meat must have been refrigerated before you start cutting it. The maximum temperature of poultry and rabbit meat is 4 °C. The maximum temperature of meat from other animals is 7 °C.

If the meat is transferred to a cutting plant from a slaughterhouse located in the same building, it can be cut warm. In this case, the meat must be refrigerated immediately after cutting and possible packaging, before the start of transport or further processing. The required temperatures are the same as stated above. These temperatures must also be maintained during transport.

Purchasing meat as raw material for minced meat and meat preparations
You can use entire, fresh skeletal muscles and fatty tissue connected to them to produce minced meat and meat preparations. Use of other meat, such as cutting waste, is not allowed.

If you are preparing minced meat or meat preparations from frozen or deep-frozen meat, the meat must, as a rule, have been cut before freezing or deep-freezing. However, minced poultry meat and raw poultry meat preparations must always be made from fresh meat that has not been frozen or deep-frozen.

More information on the requirements for minced meat and meat preparations can be found on our website.

Freshness requirements for the raw materials of minced meat
If you are making minced meat from refrigerated meat, you must mince

- poultry within three days of slaughter
- meat of other animals within six days of slaughter.

If you are making minced meat from deboned, vacuum-packed beef, it must be minced within 15 days of slaughter.

Acquisition of organic raw materials
If you sell or deliver organic products to your customers, you will be subject to control of organic origin in addition to regular food control. More information on control of organic origin is available via the links on our website.

Foods that are uncommon or unknown in Finland
You may want to use or produce a plant or animal product the use of which is not known in Finland. In that case, before using the product, you must find out whether or not it has been used as food in another EU Member State. If the product has not been used as food, its use may require a novel food authorisation. More information is available via the links on our website. You can also contact the municipal food inspector.

The import of food products
The import of many foodstuffs is subject to special requirements. You must determine such requirements before starting to import the products. More information is available via the links on our website.

Traceability

It must be possible to trace the origin of foodstuffs and their ingredients. Traceability means that you will need to be able to demonstrate from where ingredients and other products were purchased and where the finished products were delivered. You must also know the purchase and delivery times of ingredients and products.

Efficient tracing enables the effective limitation of issues related to food safety. For example, poor-quality ingredients or ingredients that cause food poisoning can be removed from the food chain when their origin or place of delivery is known.

The better you are able to connect the information of ingredients you have purchased and food you have delivered, the better you will be able to limit financial losses and health hazards in the event of an incident.

You must be able to demonstrate the origin of beef

There is a mandatory marking system in place for beef. The combination and distribution of each batch must be fully traceable. You must also keep records.

You will need to be able to demonstrate the origin of beef for each batch, at all stages of meat handling and production.

Country of origin of pork, poultry, mutton and goat

You must always be able to demonstrate the country of origin of pork, poultry, mutton and goat. This means being able to connect the country of origin information indicated on the package markings to the corresponding commercial documents for each batch.

Commercial documents include, for example, covering letters, delivery notes, dispatch lists, cash receipts (e.g., from a cash-and-carry shop), invoices and consignment notes.

Composition and recipe management

You must have written recipes for all products you make, stating the names and amounts of ingredients used for each product. Recipes and labelling must correspond to each other. When you change ingredients or recipes, you must update the recipes and labels accordingly. You must keep your recipes up to date.

Comply with requirements when creating recipes

When planning recipes, you need to take into account the requirements of food legislation regarding, among other things, additives, salt and other substances potentially added to your products. By calculating from the recipe and, if necessary, own-check inspections, you can make sure that you do not exceed the maximums for additives in your products, for example.

Only use additives and other food improvement agents (flavourings and enzymes) that are permitted for your products. The amounts of some food improvement agents have been limited. Further information is available from Evira's website.

Keep your recipes and labels up to date

You will need to make changes to your recipes in the event of changes to the law or composition of your product, or when changing raw material suppliers, for example. In order to be able to keep your recipes up to date and accurate, it is important to always obtain accurate, up-to-date product information or specifications from your raw material supplies.

When you make changes to recipes, make sure that the information about the changes is conveyed through all the handling and labelling phases, i.e., throughout the food chain.

Remember all of these steps:

- acquisition of raw materials
- labelling
- data systems
- consumer and customer information.

Manage your production process

Production process management includes, for example,

- following the recipe;
- the correct dosage of ingredients (such as salt and additives);
- preventing the contamination of products with foreign allergens; and
- ensuring that the right products are packaged in the right packages.

Your measures and scales can be manual or automatic. Make sure that you use them correctly.

Food information management

Labels must always include the statutory information if the products are delivered to consumers or catering customers such as restaurants.

You are responsible for the food information of food marketed under your name or company name.

Packages must contain the following information:

- name of the food
- ingredient list
- ingredients that can cause allergies or intolerances (a list is provided on the following pages) must be emphasised in the ingredient list
- the amounts of ingredients or ingredient groups when the ingredient is emphasised in the labelling
- the amount of food contained in the package
- the best before (e.g., frozen products) or use-by date and, if necessary, the freezing date of deep-frozen meat and meat preparations
- special storage and/or use conditions
- the producer's name or company name and address
- if necessary, the country of origin or place of departure
- instructions for use
- nutritional values
- a batch ID identifying the food products belonging to the same batch
- an identification mark for food of animal origin
- a high salt content marking if required
- any other markings required by special legislation

When labelling your products, make sure that:

1. The information provided on your food products are accurate and sufficient. They must not be misleading.
2. The labels are legible, noticeable and clear. The minimum size of a small x is 1.2 mm. The goal is for a person with normal eyesight to be able to read the label without effort or the use of aids, like reading a newspaper or book.
3. All the necessary markings are present on the package. The required markings include those provided for in the EU food information regulation and those required by special legislation where applicable.
4. The markings have been made in accordance with statutory requirements. For example, additives have been indicated with both their group name and the name or E code of the additive.

5. Compulsory labelling is in both Finnish and Swedish. Labels in one language are sufficient for products sold in monolingual municipalities.

These allergy- and intolerance-causing substances and products must be emphasised

- cereals containing gluten, i.e., wheat, barley, rye, oats and products made of these cereals;
- crustaceans and crustacean products;
- eggs and egg products;
- fish and fish products;
- peanuts and peanut products;
- soy beans and soy bean products; and
- milk and dairy products.
- nuts and nut products;
- celery and celery products;
- mustard and mustard products;
- sesame seeds and sesame seed products;
- sulphur dioxide and sulphite in concentrations of more than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/l;
- lupin and lupin products; and
- molluscs and mollusc products.

Also check that the labels and other information provided on the food correspond to the product:

- the recipes/production methods/finished products are consistent;
- the name of the food is correctly formulated;
- all ingredients used have been indicated in the ingredient list;
- compound ingredients have been correctly itemised in the ingredient list;
- ingredients that can cause allergies and intolerances have been indicated;
- the ingredients are stated in the correct order;
- the amounts of ingredients, such as meat content, are correct;
- salt content has been calculated and determined using sodium (salt = sodium × 2.5). This formula takes account of both the sodium contained naturally in the ingredients and sodium from added salt.
- the origin of the food is stated correctly; and
- the use of claims (e.g., lactose-free, gluten-free, milk-free or additive-free) is justified.

More information on food information
Examples of meat, minced meat and meat preparation labels can be found on our website.

More information on the management of food information is available in Evira's food information guide (only available in Finnish).

Food transport

If you deliver food to customers, you must make sure that its safety is not compromised during delivery.

The means of transport and containers must be clean and they must protect the food from dirt, harmful bacteria and viruses and other harmful substances.

Food must also be maintained at a safe temperature during transport. Foods requiring cold storage must be transported refrigerated and food delivered hot must be transported so that it will not cool.

Temperature limits for the transport of meat and processed meat:

- Poultry or rabbit carcasses and meat: 4 °C or below
- Other carcasses and meat: 7 °C or below
- Meat preparations: 4 °C or below
- Organs and blood: 3 °C or below
- Minced meat: 2 °C or below
- Frozen or deep-frozen meat or processed meat: -18 °C or below
- Frozen poultry meat: -12 °C or below.

Short-term deviations from these temperatures are allowed.

If the transport will take more than two hours, the vehicle must be equipped with a recording temperature management system.

Summary

When setting up a meat establishment, remember the following:

- Surfaces and utensils must be clean, intact and easy to clean.
- Make sure that materials that come into contact with foodstuffs are suitable for your purposes.
- Keep pests away from the premises.
- Each area needs its own, clean cleaning equipment.
- Monitor the reliability of raw material deliveries and the temperatures of delivered goods.
- Do not break the cold chain.
- Follow the regulations issued on the purchase of foodstuffs.
- Keep ingredients that cause allergies or intolerances separate from each other and from foodstuffs for which they are not intended.
- Ensure the traceability of food and raw materials and keep their documentation.
- Provide accurate and sufficient information on foodstuffs.
- If you transport food, maintain the correct temperature during transport.