

# HOUSE RULES

## STOCK CONTROL

The House Rules Section contains 6 sub-sections each of which covers a particular subject of food safety management.

Every House Rule sub-section begins with guidance and then provides advice on how to write your own House Rules.

A template is then provided for use when writing the House Rules.

Your House Rules should reflect your current safe working practices on the 6 food safety subject areas covered in this manual.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Read the guidance provided at the beginning of this sub-section
- Draw up your own House Rules describing how you intend to manage stock control in your business
- Once you have completed all your House Rules, remember to update your Action Plan

Think about the stock control practices that you already have in place. It is possible that you will simply have to write these down to produce your Stock Control House Rules.

**THE STOCK CONTROL HOUSE RULES ARE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF YOUR HACCP BASED SYSTEM AND MUST BE KEPT UP TO DATE AT ALL TIMES**

# HOUSE RULES STOCK CONTROL

**This sub-section will give guidance on Stock Control, which includes Traceability, Recall and Management of Allergens. At the end of the sub-section you will be asked to write your own House Rules to show how you manage Stock Control in your business.**

## What is Stock Control and why is it important?

Stock control is a general term used to describe procedures controlling the flow of food from delivery/production to sale to your customers. Stock control includes the measures taken to ensure that food is not kept beyond its shelf life.

Stock control is important because if high risk food is kept too long, even under favourable conditions, harmful bacteria may multiply. Additionally, even food with a longer shelf life, whether dried, tinned or frozen, may deteriorate in quality if kept for too long.

## Stock Control Methods

Effective stock control is an important part of your food safety management system and there are many different methods that may be used depending on the nature of the products e.g. sticky labels on roasting bags, 'Use By' date on the bottom of foil trays or on the reverse side of display tickets or colour coded day dots. It is for you to decide the most effective stock control method for all your products to ensure that they are fit for consumption when sold.

## HAZARDS (What can go wrong)

- **Microbiological Growth** – Incorrect stock rotation, storage and food handling may result in the growth of bacteria which can make food unsafe and may also spoil food.
- **Physical Contamination** – Incorrect practices during delivery, storage and handling may result in stock becoming physically contaminated.

## CONTROLS (How you can prevent or eliminate the hazard)

Contamination of stock can be minimised by the following effective stock rotation practices:

- Stock should be used on a first-in first-out basis.
- Remember to label the food produced in your premises with a suitable shelf life.
- Dried food which has been decanted from its original packaging should be labelled and stored in containers which should be both pest proof and waterproof.
- Existing stock should not be topped up with new stock, use the existing stock first.
- Damaged stock should be removed from display or from the storage area and returned to the supplier.

## SHELF LIFE, 'USE BY' AND 'BEST BEFORE'

### Shelf Life

The shelf life of food is the length of time that it remains safe or acceptable to eat in terms of food safety and food quality.

Shelf life is important. If it is too short, it will result in unnecessary wastage of food and if the shelf life is too long it can result in unsafe or poor quality food being sold. It is very important that an appropriate shelf life is given to all food and that effective stock rotation is in place to ensure that the food is sold before the shelf life expires.

The shelf life will differ for every product and depends on a number of factors such as:

- **The product formulation** e.g. pH, salt concentration, water activity, preservatives.
- **The processing treatments** e.g. heat treatment at 70°C for 2 minutes or equivalent.
- **How it is intended to be stored** e.g. refrigerated, frozen or ambient.
- **Any potential hazards identified with a particular product.**

It is therefore your responsibility to assess all the relevant information/factors that affect the safety and quality of particular foods, and decide on the appropriate shelf life and storage conditions.

When applying shelf life you should be able to provide sufficient evidence, to the satisfaction of your Enforcement Officer, to validate and show that the product will not be unsafe during the shelf life. In terms of microbiological safety, shelf life analysis should take into account all relevant pathogenic, indicator and spoilage microorganisms.

**Bought-in ready-to-eat food** will have a shelf life determined by the manufacturer and depending on the nature of the food it will be either a 'Use By' or 'Best Before' date, for example, "*Use By 12/10, keep refrigerated and use within 2 days of opening*".

**Additional Advice** can be provided by a food research association such as Campden BRI or Leatherhead Food Research or a trade association with regards to setting a safe shelf life for specific products.

**Note:** Remember to keep the back-up evidence of shelf life evaluation e.g. lab tests, sample results and any follow up action taken as part of your HACCP based system documentation.

### The 'Use By' date mark

This date mark relates to the safety of the food and applies to food which is highly perishable and likely, after a relatively short period of time, to present a risk of food poisoning. These foods are typically ready-to-eat and should be stored at low temperatures, examples include cooked meats, pies and puddings.

**Important: It is an offence to sell food after its 'Use By' date has passed.**

### The 'Best Before' date mark

This date mark relates to quality and is found on the label of most packaged food. It indicates the period of time that a food can reasonably be expected to retain its optimal condition from a quality point of view. Food with a 'Best Before' date can usually be stored at ambient temperatures and tends to have a longer shelf life, examples include bread rolls and tinned or packet goods. It is recommended that you do not sell food after its 'Best Before' date has passed.

## VACUUM PACKING and MODIFIED ATMOSPHERE PACKING

Vacuum Packing (VP) and Modified Atmosphere Packing (MAP) are processing methods which can allow the shelf life of chilled food to be increased by inhibiting the growth of bacteria.

- VP removes air and protects the product with an airtight seal.
- MAP replaces air with a strictly controlled mixture of gases.

**Note:** You should consider carefully the benefits of increased shelf life against the food safety risks associated with these processes.

### HAZARDS (What can go wrong)

- **Microbiological contamination** – VP and MAP equipment must never be used to pack both raw and ready-to-eat food because of the risk of cross contamination from the packing equipment (refer to the [Cross Contamination Prevention House Rules](#) for further information).
- **Microbiological growth** – the absence of air encourages the growth of anaerobic bacteria such as *Clostridium botulinum*, which are extremely dangerous in extended shelf life food.
- **Chemical contamination** – unsuitable wrapping/films could leach chemicals into the VP or MAP food.

### CONTROLS (How can you prevent or eliminate the hazard)

Shelf life and temperature control are critical factors in the safe storage, distribution and sale of VP and MAP food. **To ensure food safety, a maximum 10 day shelf life is recommended for both raw and ready-to-eat VP and MAP food which is stored between 3°C and 8°C.**

Should you wish to extend the shelf life beyond 10 days, at least one of the following additional controlling factors must be used:

- pH,
- Salt level,
- Water activity,
- Heat treatment,
- Storage below 3°C,
- The use of preservatives or a combination of these factors.

The use of any of the above additional controlling factors must be shown to be safe and will require expert scientific advice. There are other controlling factors that can be taken into account and it is possible that your products could have a longer shelf life than stated.

For further information, contact a UKAS Accredited Food Laboratory for shelf life evaluation testing.

### Re-packing of VP and MAP food

If a VP or MAP product is unwrapped for slicing or portioning and then re-packed/wrapped as a VP or MAP product, the shelf-life must not be extended either beyond the original shelf life or beyond 10 days, whichever time period is shorter.

Indeed, unless one of the additional controlling factors listed above is used, the shelf life of the product is likely to be reduced by the repackaging/wrapping process. The new 'Use By' date applied by you should reflect this change.

## TRACEABILITY, WITHDRAWAL and RECALL

### Traceability

The purpose of traceability is to assist withdrawal (food taken out of the food chain) and recall (food returned to the manufacturer by the consumer) of unsafe food.

### Withdrawal and recall

You could be involved in a recall of products manufactured by another business or you could be required to withdraw (and recall) a product or products which you have supplied to other businesses. There are several reasons why a food might be withdrawn or recalled. Examples include:

- Incorrect labelling which may include omission of allergen information,
- Bacterial contamination,
- Physical contamination (e.g. glass or plastic).

When a withdrawal or recall is necessary, you may have to carry out the following actions:

- Identify and locate the affected product, lot/batch number, 'Use By' date, 'Best Before' date/production code and distribution list.
- Investigate and determine if any other products may be affected.
- Prevent affected product re-entering the food chain.
- Notify your local Environmental Health Office immediately.
- Provide full information to alert customers to the risk, e.g. by a window notice, local press release or local radio notification (in the case of product recall of over-the-counter sales).

### Records

It is a legal requirement for any food business which supplies food to other businesses to be able to supply the following information on request:

- An accurate description of the food.
- The quantity of food distributed.
- The name and address of businesses which have supplied food to you.
- The name and address of businesses receiving the food (not the final customer) and,
- The date of delivery or dispatch.

In the event of a food emergency requiring either withdrawal and/or recall, time is crucial. It is good practice, that you have a record of the person who will co-ordinate the actions, including out of hours contact details and contact details of your Environmental Health office.

It is for you to decide how long these records should be kept, bearing in mind the nature of the food and its shelf life.

Please note that information on traceability, withdrawal and recall may be subject to change and you may wish to check with your Enforcement Officer or on the Food Standards Agency website ([www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)) to obtain the most up to date information.

## MANAGEMENT OF FOOD ALLERGENS

Some people have sensitivity to certain food that non-sufferers would find harmless. When someone has a food allergy, their immune system reacts to a particular food as if it is unsafe. A severe food allergy can cause a life-threatening reaction. Food intolerance does not involve the immune system and is not generally life-threatening.

It is important that you and your staff are aware of the composition of the food you sell to enable you to cater for customers with food allergies and intolerances.

The most common food which may cause an allergic reaction is listed below:

- **Sulphur Dioxide and Sulphites** – it is an offence to exceed the maximum permitted level of 450 mg/kg of sulphur dioxide and sulphites in sausages and burgers.
- **Peanuts and nuts** such as almonds, hazelnuts and also nut products.
- **Cereals containing gluten** – if you are producing gluten-free products such as gluten-free sausages, you will need to be satisfied that the product contains no allergen prior to its sale.
- **Fish and shellfish.**
- **Dairy products** such as milk and eggs.
- **Soya and soya products, mustard, celery, sesame seeds, lupin seeds and lupin flour.**

### Key Allergen messages:

- **Food allergies can kill** – talk to your staff about the risks and train them in allergy awareness – this includes your staff handling food and also your counter staff.
- Know all of the ingredients in the food that you prepare.
- Keep food that can cause an allergic reaction and/or intolerance separate from other food.
- Utensils and equipment used with food that can cause allergic reactions and/or intolerance should be kept separate from other utensils and equipment or cleaned thoroughly after use.
- Be aware of the ingredients in bought-in products for example, marinades, gravy mixes or seasonings.
- Make sure that you and your staff understand that you should never guess whether or not an ingredient is present in a food. Always be honest with the customer. If you do not know if the food is allergen free, admit it!

**Note:** Cooking does not usually eliminate allergen risks

### Communicating with your customers

Let your customers with allergies know that you are allergen aware and give advice on which food they should avoid. Always reflect the presence of allergens on your signs or tickets.

#### How do I get the most up to date information on allergens?

Check with your Enforcement Officer or on the Food Standards Agency website to obtain the most up to date information.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO NOW

To effectively manage your Stock Control part of your HACCP based system and using the information in this sub-section for guidance, go to the next page and write a list of House Rules to reflect how you manage Stock Control in your business.

Here is an example of how you could write your House Rules:

	Describe:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control Measures and Critical Limits (where applicable)</li> <li>• Monitoring including frequency</li> </ul>
<b>Stock Control</b>	<u>Method</u>
Describe your method and controls	<p><i>Colour coded day dots are always used on trays and the back of tickets. Checked each day by the supervisor prior to opening time.</i></p> <p><u>Controls:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Stock is used on a first-in first-out basis, checked at each delivery</i></li> <li>- <i>Any damaged stock will be returned to the manufacturer</i></li> <li>- <i>Decanted stock is labelled and stored in the containers provided</i></li> <li>- <i>Shelf life information is provided for customers on food made on site</i></li> </ul>

## Monitoring and Recording

You must carry out suitable monitoring to ensure that your Stock Control House Rules are implemented at all times and keep appropriate records to demonstrate this. Any failure to adhere to the Stock Control House Rules would be considered to be a **very serious matter** and must trigger prompt Corrective Action to prevent the supply of safe food.

### Corrective Action (What to do if things go wrong)

Corrective Action should be predetermined and written into your House Rules.

Examples include:

- Reject the food.
- Review the problem and prevent it happening again.
- Retrain the staff member.
- Dispose of the food.

Corrective Actions should be written down in the **Supervisor Checks record**. This will help you to ensure that any failure is not repeated and demonstrate that no unsafe food was supplied.

*Records of Stock Control Monitoring and Corrective Action(s) taken, should be kept for an appropriate period of time, to demonstrate that your HACCP based system is working effectively.*

## Action Plan

Once you have completed all your House Rules, remember to update your Action Plan.

**The Stock Control House Rules are an essential component of your HACCP based system and must be reviewed and kept up to date at all times. Your House Rules need to be written to accurately reflect how you run your business.**

# STOCK CONTROL HOUSE RULES

Write your House Rules in the table below:

Describe:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control Measures and Critical Limits (where applicable)</li> <li>• Monitoring including frequency</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Stock Control</b></p> <p>Describe your method and controls</p>				
<p><b>Shelf Life</b></p> <p>Given to ready-to-eat food made on your premises</p>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Shelf life given</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Shelf life given</b>
<p><b>Vacuum Pack and MAP products</b></p> <p>Give information on the shelf life given.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> If you wish to give a shelf life over 10 days you should have validated procedures and have discussed this with your Enforcement Officer</p>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Shelf Life Given</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Shelf Life Given</b>

Describe:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control Measures and Critical Limits (where applicable)</li> <li>• Monitoring including frequency</li> </ul>	
<b>Traceability, Withdrawal and Recall procedures</b>	
<b>My out of hours contact details</b>	
<b>Rules on Allergen Management:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check labels of bought in food and ingredients</li> <li>• Note down where food containing allergens is stored and prepared</li> <li>• When staff will be trained on allergen management.</li> </ul> Remember to note this down in the <b>Personal Hygiene and Training House Rules</b>	
<b>Communication with customers with allergies</b>	
Monitoring and recording records used in your business	

My Corrective Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
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Signed ..... Date .....

Position in the business .....

**The Stock Control House Rules are an essential component of your HACCP based system and must be kept up to date at all times**