

**Food Safety Guidance**

**Egg Safety for Caterers**

Some eggs can contain Salmonella bacteria inside or on their shells, so it’s important you know how to handle them and how to use them. This is because Salmonella can cause very serious illness, especially among people who are vulnerable to infection (such as pregnant women, young children and elderly people). In severe cases, Salmonella food poisoning can cause death.

**Sourcing eggs**

Caterers should always buy eggs from reputable suppliers which are able to demonstrate the traceability and provenance of their supply.

Due to the risk of Salmonella, it is best to purchase UK eggs and source them from a reputable supplier which uses eggs from flocks that are part of a scheme which vaccinates chickens with an effective anti-Salmonella vaccination programme. This reduces the chance that eggs will have Salmonella inside or on the shells.

If you are going to prepare foods that contain raw or lightly cooked eggs (such as soft boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise), and are likely to be serving individuals who may be vulnerable to infection, you should use eggs that have been produced under the Lion Code.



If you are unable to verify that your egg supply is sourced from vaccinated flocks and has been produced under the Lion Code or a demonstrably-equivalent comprehensive scheme, you should ensure all of your egg dishes are thoroughly cooked or produced using pasteurised egg.

**Can I be sure that an egg is Salmonella-free?**

There has been a major reduction in the microbiological risk from Salmonella in UK hen shell eggs, and this is especially the case for eggs produced under the Lion Code Quality Assurance Scheme. It should be noted that the risk from non-UK eggs has not been reduced to the same extent.

Although eggs produced from UK vaccinated flocks present a lower risk, it is not possible to guarantee that any egg will be free from Salmonella, whatever the source or brand. So you still need to be careful how you handle all eggs. Remember it’s always better to source your eggs from a reputable supplier.

Caterers are reminded of the following good egg hygiene and handling practices:

* Store eggs in a cool, dry place, ideally in the fridge, and clean the storage area regularly
* Keep eggs away from other foods, when they are still in the shell and when you have cracked them open
* Don’t use damaged or dirty eggs
* Be careful not to splash raw egg onto other foods, surfaces or dishes
* If you are breaking eggs to use later (sometimes called ‘pooling’) keep the liquid egg in the fridge and take out small amounts as needed
* Use all ‘pooled’ liquid egg on the same day and don’t add new eggs to top it up
* Use pasteurised or Lion Code eggs for raw or lightly cooked eggs
* Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after touching eggs or working with them
* Clean and disinfect food areas, dishes and utensils thoroughly after working with eggs
* Serve egg dishes straight away, or cool them quickly and keep them chilled

Ideally, you should do all your work with raw eggs at one time. Remember that drips of egg and broken shells could spread bacteria. You should dispose of the shells carefully, and thoroughly clean surfaces, sinks, dishes and utensils before starting a different type of work. All staff should wash their hands with warm water and soap, and dry them thoroughly, before and after working with eggs.

**Duck/Goose/Quail eggs**

Non-hen eggs carry a higher risk of Salmonella and should not be used to prepare raw or lightly cooked egg dishes. Eggs from species other than chickens should always be cooked thoroughly.

**Raw and lightly cooked hen eggs**

Caterers should always consider the potential health status of the individuals they will be preparing egg dishes for, and need to take extra care when preparing and serving raw eggs, soft boiled eggs and any foods that are prepared using raw or lightly cooked eggs such as soft boiled eggs, mousses, soufflés and fresh mayonnaise. This is particularly important for those who are catering specifically for individuals who may be more vulnerable to infection (such as infants, young children, pregnant women, elderly people and those who are unwell).

If you are serving raw eggs or lightly cooked egg dishes to the general public, it is important to use UK hen eggs and to always ensure these are sourced from a reputable supplier who is able to demonstrate the traceability and provenance of their supply. Safe handling and hygiene practices as detailed above are of particular importance.

If you are a caterer who is likely to be serving raw eggs, eggs with runny yolks or any food that contains raw or less than thoroughly cooked eggs to people who might be more vulnerable to infection you should use eggs produced under the Lion Code. If you are unable to verify that your egg supply is sourced from vaccinated flocks and has been produced under the Lion Code, you should ensure all of your egg dishes are thoroughly cooked or prepared using pasteurised egg.

It is important to note that this advice does not apply to meals intended for individuals who are severely immuno-compromised and require medically supervised diets. Medical advice should always be sought when preparing food for these individuals.

**If you require further information, please contact Falkirk Council’s Food & Safety team at** **fs@falkirk.gov.uk**