

food industry fact sheet



Food safety information for doggy bags

This fact sheet has been designed to assist restaurant and catering businesses manage the potential risks from giving customers doggy bags for food not consumed at the restaurant or catering site.

The term doggy bag developed when food left uneaten at a restaurant was taken home for the family pet. Today, many customers will consume that food themselves, but at a later time. Customers may be unaware that the safety of uneaten food taken away has been compromised.

The food purchased by a customer at a restaurant becomes the property of that customer. It may be seen as poor customer service if a restaurateur bans doggy bags. In the interests of public health, both your staff and your customers should be aware of the risks associated with the practice of taking away uneaten food from a restaurant in doggy bags for human consumption.

Risks of Doggy Bags

Doggy bags differ from normal takeaway foods, because takeaway foods are intended to be eaten away from the premises and are served in a takeaway container by the food business at the appropriate temperature, that is: hot foods are served hot at 60°C or above or colds foods served cold at 5°C or below.

Food for doggy bags can be exposed to the following hazards:

- Temperature abuse (time in the temperature danger zone of between 5°C and 60°C)
- Handling by consumer (contamination with *Staphylococcus aureus* (golden Staph) which can produce staphylococcal enterotoxins which are heat stable and cause food-borne illness)
- Contamination with other food borne pathogens such as *Salmonella*
- Cross contamination between cooked and uncooked foods

Possible Solutions

If a customer requests a doggy bag, the risks may be minimised by:

- Have a set procedure for dealing with doggy bags and instruct your staff on this procedure (eg Write the date and, if you have time, put a code on the container and in an appropriate record book. Recording this information may be helpful in the case of a consumer taking legal action against a proprietor for selling unsafe food. The records demonstrate responsible actions were taken on the part of the proprietor)
- Transfer the food into a new, food grade container
- Have an instruction sticker or leaflet which explains the risks of doggy bags and sets suitable storage and reheating conditions for the food (see example)



Where do I go for more information?

- **Restaurant and Catering Queensland**
PO Box 101
Royal Brisbane Hospital
QLD 4029
Telephone: 07 3252 8880
Facsimile: 07 3252 7554

Email:
rcqld@restaurantcater.asn.au

Web Site:
www.restaurantcater.asn.au

or contact the Environmental Health Officer from your local government.



Queensland
Government
Queensland Health



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION
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A joint initiative between **Restaurant and Catering Queensland, Queensland Health, Local Government Association of Queensland and the Australian Institute of Environmental Health** to assist the food service industry produce safe food.