

# Buffet style self-service food

It is essential that openly displayed or unpackaged food at self-serve buffets is safe to eat. Business operators can make sure food is safe through proper planning, observing food safety controls and constant supervision.

## The risks

Open service food is susceptible to contamination and spoilage for a number of reasons. They include:

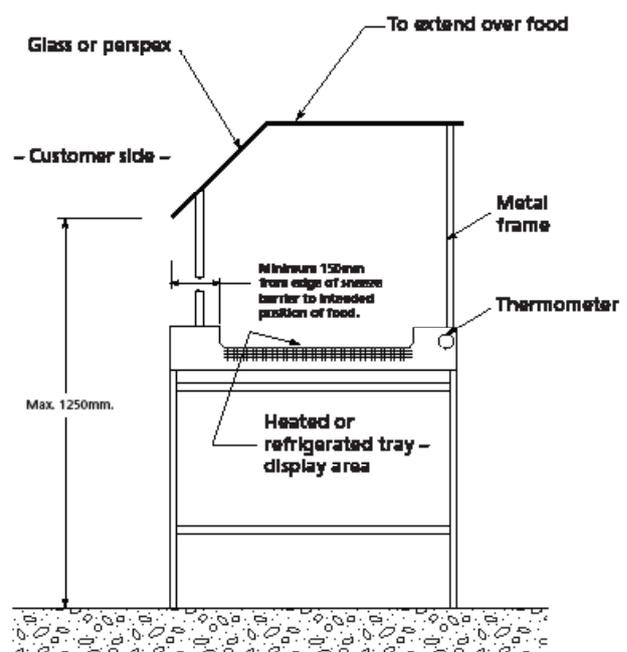
- patrons accessing food in a self-serve fashion, which means the business loses control of verifiable 'kitchen to table' food safety
- the vulnerability of the food to accidental or deliberate tampering or malpractice
- inadequately covered or protected food being contaminated by air, insects or physical matter
- indirect contamination of uncovered or unpackaged food through patrons coughing, sneezing or even talking, as physical barriers (sneeze guards) are not always effective
- the difficulty of maintaining open service food at required temperatures of 5°C or below / 60°C or above

## Recommended control measures

- Adopt an accredited Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) Food Safety Plan and have the system independently audited.
- Buy all foods from approved HACCP suppliers.
- Where possible, use non-potentially hazardous foods.
- Prepare meals using the correct food handling procedures, hygiene practices and contamination controls. Rapid chill and reheat rules should be followed.
- Make sure all workers have completed food safety training and have a professional approach to their work.
- Make sure the premises are clean and maintained in accordance with the National Food Safety Standards.
- Stack plates, cups and glasses so they are protected from contamination and wrap or store cutlery vertically with the handle up.
- Make sure food display equipment, including the buffet unit, containers and implements, are appropriately designed to best protect the food.
- Keep hot food at 60°C or above and cold food at 5°C or below.
- It is advisable not to display a food dish on the buffet for more than one hour.
- Limit the quantity of each food item displayed.

- Never top-up displayed food dishes but replace them with fresh food.
- Never reuse previously displayed food except hermetically sealed and safe items.
- Provide separate serving utensils for each displayed food item.
- Advise patrons of required food safety procedures with clearly visible, easy-to-understand signage. Use appropriate symbols whenever possible.
- Recommend that when children are serving themselves food, they be accompanied by an adult.
- Recommend patrons use a clean plate each time they return to the buffet.
- Closely supervise the food display. Video surveillance is recommended.
- Advise patrons when they are doing the wrong thing.

Variations in design may occur where tray races and/or decorative work are fitted to display fronts



Recommended design of self-serve protective barrier

For more information, contact your local Council

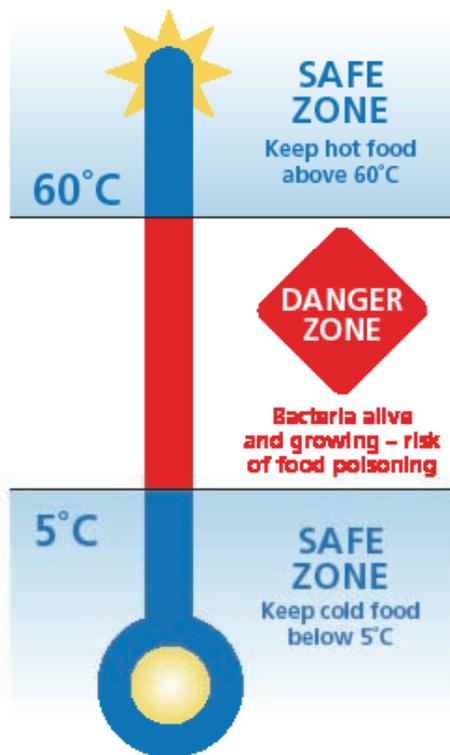
## The law

National Food Safety Standards have been developed to reduce food-borne illnesses and help businesses produce food that is safe to eat. Council is legally required to enforce these laws. If a business is breaching the standards, a statutory notice will be issued and if the problem is not rectified, the business may be prosecuted.

Copies of the standards are available from Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). Ph: (02) 6271 2222 or visit [foodstandards.gov.au](http://foodstandards.gov.au).



*Protective barriers and separate serving utensils must be provided with all unpacked ready-to-eat food and food must be effectively supervised.*



*Keep hot food at 60°C or above and cold food at 5°C or below.*



*Keep hot food at 60°C or above.*



*Keep cold food at 5°C or below.*

**For further information on this topic, please contact Council.**