Food packaging

If you're a food business, it's important to know what types of packaging are safe to use with your food products.

What are the requirements?

Under Standard 3.2.2 - Food Safety Practices and General Requirements, food businesses must:

- only use packaging material that is fit for its intended purpose
- only use material that is not likely to cause food contamination
- ensure there is no likelihood that the food may become contaminated during the packaging process.

What are the risks?

Packaging can potentially make food unsafe or unsuitable, for example if:

- something contaminates food during the packaging process
- harmful microorganisms get into food from dirty or damaged packaging
- parts of the packaging break off into food (e.g. glass or plastic fragments)
- chemicals leach from packaging into food.

Chemicals in food packaging

Chemicals can leach from some food packaging under certain conditions. Things that can affect leaching into food include:

- whether the packaging has direct or indirect contact with food
- type of food (e.g. some packaging is unsuitable for oily or acidic foods)
- storage conditions (e.g. time, temperature, humidity)
- whether the food will be microwaved or heated in the packaging
- cleaning and sanitising the packaging for reuse
- use of recycled materials for packaging.

The Chemicals in food packaging web page at www.foodstandards.gov.au has further information.

Reduce your risk

Choose the right packaging:

- only use clean, undamaged, food-safe packaging
- buy from a reputable source
- know the composition of your food and check the packaging is suitable (ask the supplier or manufacturer for assurance or certification that the material is food-safe)
- check manufacturer's instructions or symbols to confirm the packaging can take the conditions it will be exposed to, such as freezing, microwaving, or use in dishwashers

Use packaging correctly:

- handle with good hygienic practices
- store in a secure and clean place
- consider how long and where food will be stored in the packaging and check it will stay safe under those conditions
- use appropriate cleaning and sanitising methods
- only reuse packaging or other materials if safe for food (e.g. don't repeatedly use packaging designed for single use)
- consider using a food-safe inner liner if there's a risk of chemicals leaching into food.

Need more information?

Safe Food Australia is a guide to the food safety standards in Chapter 3 of the Food Standards Code. Food packaging is under Standard 3.2.2 clause 9.

Copies of the guide, some translated fact sheets and other information is available at www.foodstandards.gov.au or by emailing information@foodstandards.gov.au

Food safety doesn't just happen