

# Your Guide to Food Safety



## Pre-Planning and Tips for Food Safety

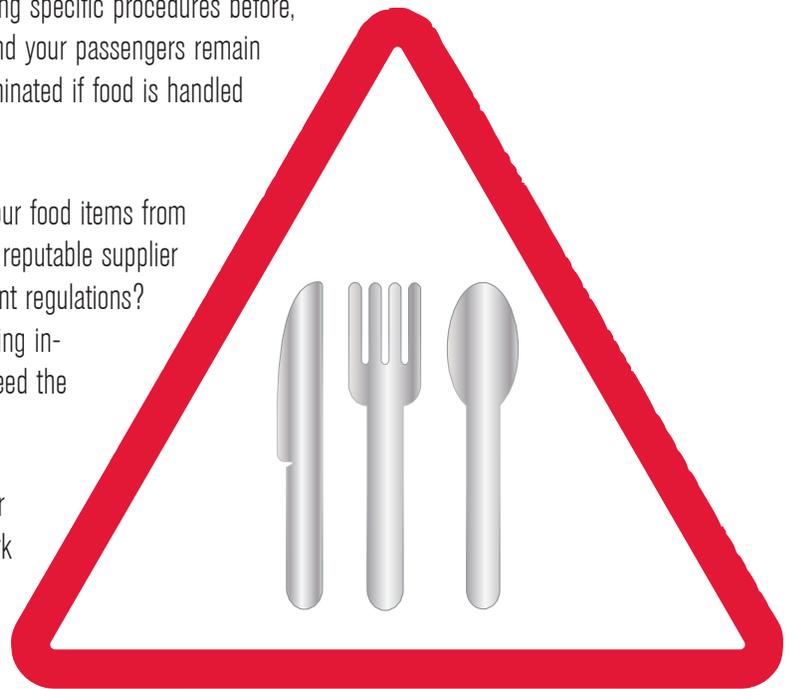
At Air Culinaire Worldwide, we view flight attendants as the heart of the crew. We work closely with the flight attendant community to develop training classes as well as tools and resources that you can use to elevate your level of service.

Did you know that passengers often assess the satisfaction of their in-flight experience based on the quality of the meals served onboard? As a flight attendant, you understand the importance of providing food that not only tastes great, but looks great, too. Just as important, the meals must meet all safety standards.

Managing food safety can be a complex task given the many uncontrollable factors that can arise onboard. However, by taking the proper precautions and following specific procedures before, during and after a flight, you can ensure that you, your crew and your passengers remain safe. In fact, foodborne illnesses can be almost completely eliminated if food is handled properly from the time it is ordered to the time it is served.

One of the best ways to ensure meals are safe is to procure your food items from a trustworthy source. Ask yourself this: Does our caterer use a reputable supplier for their food? Does that supplier meet or exceed all government regulations? If you're proactive, you can prevent serious situations from arising in-flight. With proper training for you and your crew, you can exceed the expectations of even your most discerning passengers.

You are a vital member of the crew, and you have a lot on your plate. To help you avoid the unexpected and take the guesswork out of managing the procurement and serving of meals onboard, we have developed this go-to planning guide. Utilize these tips from Air Culinaire Worldwide to help plan for catering, food safety, and much more.



**CAUTION**

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Contact John Detloff, Vice President of Flight Attendant Services at [jdetloff@airculinaire.com](mailto:jdetloff@airculinaire.com) for more details.

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Below is a list of important operational considerations when planning for your catering order.

## RESTAURANTS

Questions to ask restaurants prior to placing an order:

- Does the restaurant require its employees to be food safety certified?
- Are you able to tour the restaurant kitchen?
- What type of packaging does the restaurant have?
- Will you have to supply some or all of the packaging?
- Do they offer take out food?
- What are their hours of operation?
- Are there advance ordering requirements (critical if stay coincides with major local events)?
- What are your payment options (credit card or cash)? Do you need local currency?
- Can they arrange non-local items?
- What is their cancellation policy?
- Are there restricted food items (e.g., agricultural restrictions)?
- Are they allowed to give you the food served cold (below 40 F (50C))?
- Can they deliver directly to the airport?

## GROCERY STORES

Questions to ask when procuring food from a grocery store:

- Does the grocery store adhere to local food safety regulations?
- If you purchase hot, ready-to-eat food, will it be served within 2 hours?
- Are there regulations that prevent bringing outside food into the airport?
- Are there restricted food items (e.g., agricultural restrictions)?
- What are the store's hours of operation?
- What is the distance from the store to the airport?
- What are your payment options (credit card or cash)? Do you need local currency?
- How are you going to store the food once purchased?
- Do you have the right equipment to cook or reheat the food on board?

## CATERERS

Questions to ask your caterer prior to placing an order:

- Is the caterer located near the airport?
- Are you able to visit the catering facility?
- Are the managers, chefs and other employees food safety-certified?
- Are there advance ordering requirements (critical if stay coincides with major local events)?
- Are there down payment or pre-payment requirements?
- What is the lead time to arrange for non-local items?
- What is their cancellation policy?
- Are there restricted food items (e.g., agricultural restrictions)?
- Do you have the ability to store food items with the caterer?
- What is the in-flight catering delivery time (particularly, how far in advance catering is recommended to be delivered)?
- Is there ramp access availability (when needed during your stay and on day of departure)?

## HOTELS

Questions to ask hotels prior to placing an order:

- Is the hotel food safety certified?
- Are you able to tour the hotel kitchen?
- What type of packaging does the restaurant have?
- Will you have to supply some or all of the packaging?
- Do you have to be a guest at the hotel to place an order?
- Are there advance ordering requirements (critical if stay coincides with major local events)?
- Can you pay by charging the order to your room?
- What is the lead time to arrange for non-local items?
- What is their cancellation policy?
- Are there restricted food items (e.g., agricultural restrictions)?
- Are you able to store food items with the hotel?
- Can the hotel deliver directly to the airport?

## FOOD ALLERGENS

It is highly likely you or your flight crew members will encounter passengers with food sensitivities or allergies. Food Allergy Research and Education researchers estimate up to 15 million Americans and 17 million Europeans have food allergies or intolerances. A food allergy is an immune system response to a food it senses is harmful. Individual reactions to allergies differ; some may react immediately while others will display milder symptoms after a period of time. An anaphylactic reaction is a serious, rapid allergic reaction that, if not treated, can be life threatening.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Eight major foods account for 90 percent of all food allergies!

#### (1) Milk:

Allergies are usually from cow's milk, but can be from sheep, goats and buffalo. Most milk allergies are not life-threatening.

#### (2) Eggs:

Allergic reactions to eggs are most common in children. It is possible to be allergic to just the white or the yolk of the egg.

#### (3) Fish and (4) Shellfish:

Finned fish and shellfish do not come from related families of foods, so being allergic to one does not necessarily mean you must avoid both.

#### (5) Tree Nuts and (6) Peanuts:

Tree nuts include, but are not limited to, walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios and Brazil nuts. Peanuts grow underground and are part of a different plant family, legumes. Other examples of legumes include beans, peas, and lentils.

#### (7) Wheat:

Allergic reactions to wheat are most common in children. Wheat substitutions include amaranth, barley, corn, oat, quinoa, rice, rye and tapioca.

#### (8) Soya (Soybeans):

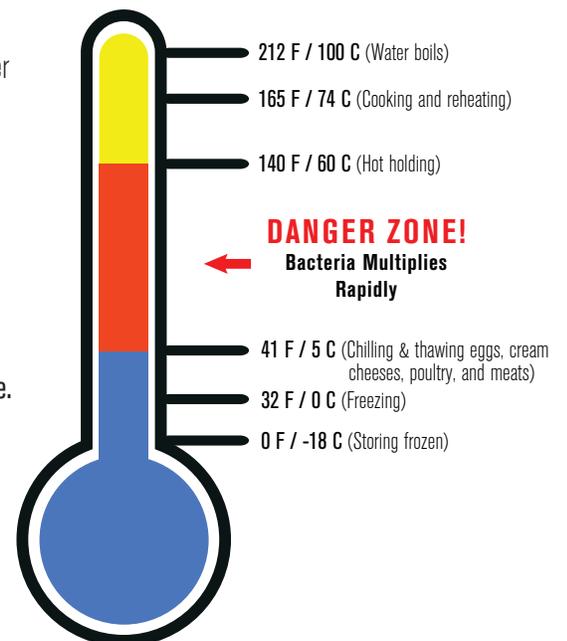
Soybeans are a member of the legume family. People with a soy allergy are not necessarily allergic to other legumes.

The only way to prevent an allergic reaction to food during a flight is to avoid having any food onboard that the passenger is allergic to. Prior to your scheduled flight and before placing your catering order, identify any food allergies your passengers have and request that their meals be allergen-free. Also, notify caterers of allergies to tree nuts, as proper precautions must be taken to avoid cross-contamination.

## THE FOOD DANGER ZONE

Bacteria grow rapidly between 41 F (5 C) and 140 F (60 C) (the food danger zone), and can double in as little as 20 minutes. In order to keep food out of the danger zone, the following measures must be taken by your in-flight caterer and your flight crew when handling meals:

- Never leave food out of refrigeration more than two hours.
- If the temperature is above 90 F (32 C), foods should not be left out more than one hour.
- Ensure the right thermometers and temperatures are readily available. In the galley, if you are not serving hot food right away, it is important to keep it at 140 F (60 C) or above. Additionally, cold food should be kept at or below 41 F (5 C).
- Incorporate time and temperature controls into your daily practice.
- Set policies to make clear to caterers and flight crew the steps to be taken if food is time/temperature abused.



## COOKING AND REHEATING

Inadequate cooking may allow bacteria to not only survive, but multiply. The same is true of reheating, which is what the majority of in-flight food service entails. Food must be cooked to the minimum internal temperature for the required length of time (see chart below). A clean, sanitized thermometer must be used to ensure that food is cooked thoroughly. Some spores and toxins can survive boiling, so it's important to note that cooking without measuring the food's internal temperature is not a guarantee of safety.

Eggs	Ground meats	Beef Steaks	Poultry	Fish	Pork, Veal and Lamb
Raw eggs: cook until 145 F (63 C) for 15 seconds.	Cook until 155 F (68 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 145 F (63 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 165 F (74 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 145 F (63 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 145 F (63 C) for 15 seconds
Tenderized Meats	Stuffing and Stuffed Foods	Game	Leftovers	Fruits and Vegetables	Ready-to-Eat Foods
Cook until 155 F (68 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 165 F (74 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 145 F (63 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 165 F (74 C) for 15 seconds	Cook until 135 F (57 C)	Cook until 145 F (63 C) for 15 seconds

Previously cooked and cooled foods (leftovers) must be rapidly reheated to an internal temperature of 165 F (74 C) for 15 seconds. Food that is being reheated for immediate service may be used at any temperature as long as it was previously cooked and cooled properly.

When reheating food, to ensure even distribution of heat, the pot or pan should be larger than the heat source, and the food should be frequently stirred. Microwavable food should be rotated and stirred during the cooking process to ensure even heat distribution, achieving a temperature of 165 F (74 C) throughout. Food should be covered to maintain moisture. When using a microwave to reheat foods, all parts of the food must reach an internal temperature of 165 F (74 C).

Once food is prepared, it must be held at the proper temperature until it is served, to prevent microorganisms from multiplying. To avoid contamination, use pans and utensils made of suitable materials, cover pans when not stirring and taste food only with a clean, sanitized spoon.

## KEYS TO PREVENTING FOODBORNE ILLNESS

- Know who is supplying the food for your aircraft.
- Reject any food you suspect is contaminated.
- Protect food from contamination.
- Wash your hands when handling food.
- Discard any unsafe food.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Reheat prepared foods to 165 F (7 C).
- Keep hot food hot.
- Keep cold food cold.

**DON'T FORGET! ALWAYS:  
CLEAN - SEPARATE - COOK - CHILL**



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