

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points

Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (H.A.C.C.P.) are part of a food safety management system using the principles of HACCP which will enable hazards to be identified and controlled before they threaten the safety of food and your customers.

There are 7 principles of HACCP:

1. Identify the hazards.

Look at each step (e.g. purchasing, delivery, storage, preparation, cooking, chilling etc.) in your operation and identify what can go wrong e.g. Salmonella in a cooked chicken product due to cross contamination with raw meat (biological hazard), contamination of uncovered food with detergent (chemical hazard) or a piece of broken glass fallen into an uncovered food (physical hazard). Decide on the control measure needed i.e. cooking to reduce bacteria to a safe level.

2. Determine the critical control points (CCPs)

Identify the points in your operation that ensures control of the hazards e.g. cooking raw meat thoroughly will kill pathogens such as E. coli O157.

3. Establish critical limit.

Set limits to enable you to identify when a CCP is out of control e.g. when cooking beef burgers, the centre of the burger must reach a minimum temperature of 75°C for 30 seconds (or an equivalent time temperature combination e.g. 70°C for 2 minutes) to ensure pathogens are reduced to a safe level.

4. Establish a system to monitor control of the CCP.

When CCPs and critical limits have been identified it is important to have a way to monitor and record what is happening at each CCP. Typically monitoring will involve measuring parameters such as temperature and time. How you monitor and how often will depend on the size and nature of your business. Monitoring should in all cases be simple, clear and easy to do e.g. probe refrigerated food to ensure that it is being maintained below 8°C to comply with the law but more typically below 5°C.

5. Establish the corrective action to be taken when monitoring indicates that a particular CCP is not under control.

When monitoring indicates that a CCP is not under control, corrective action must be taken e.g. the temperature of the food in a refrigerator rises to 10°C due to a technical fault or cooking temperatures are not reached then you would carry out the correct action which might mean destroying the food or simply cooking it for longer.

6. Establish procedures for verification to confirm the HACCP system is working effectively.

Review and correct the system periodically and whenever you make changes to your operation e.g. when replacing an oven verify that the time/temperature settings in the new oven achieves the minimum safe cooking temperature for a particular dish by probing the food.

7. Establish documentation concerning all procedures and records appropriate to these principles and their application.

For the successful implementation of HACCP, appropriate documentation and records must be kept and be readily available. It is unrealistic to operate HACCP or to demonstrate compliance with the current legislation without providing evidence such as written records. As with HACCP itself, the complexity of the record keeping will very much depend on the nature and complexity of the business. The aim should be to ensure control is maintained without generating excessive paperwork.