

HACCP – Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points

Constructing a basic HACCP plan

HACCP and your business

All food businesses must have in place a food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). This will enable you to

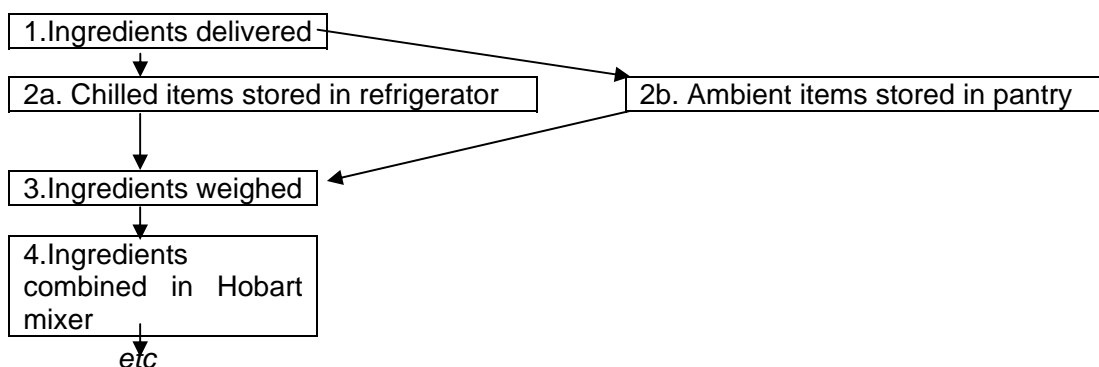
- Identify the hazards (physical, chemical and microbiological) involved in making your products
- Explain how **you** will prevent these occurring in your business
- Create a system of monitoring and record keeping to show how you are doing this

For many small businesses there may well be only a few hazards for a particular product, however it is vital that you are aware of these in order that you can take steps to eliminate them or reduce them to an acceptable level to make your food safe.

Initial areas to identify

- Record who is responsible for writing this HACCP plan
- Identify the product or process to be assessed in this plan
- Are you limiting yourself to a particular set of hazards, e.g. microbiological, physical contaminants, allergens or are you analysing them all?
- What are your product's ingredients?
- Who are your customers? For example do you supply a 'vulnerable group' such as the very old or very young?
- Are you assessing the hazards along the whole process, e.g. from the purchase of your ingredients to the final product's distribution?
- Design a basic flow chart showing the manufacturing process

Flow chart example



Prerequisites

Prerequisites are the 'background' checks and processes you undertake that will support your HACCP plan. Very often you do these automatically but they support your overall plan and by doing them systematically you will reduce the chance of your producing contaminated food. Examples of these prerequisites include cleaning, pest control and staff training.

You must therefore ensure that you have arrangements for these and any others you identify. It would also be helpful to record your cleaning schedule in writing, recording what you clean, how often you do so and what chemicals you use.

Constructing a HACCP plan

Construct a table along these lines:

What is the Hazard?	What is the hazard's Critical Limit?	Is it a Critical Control Point?	How will I monitor for breaches?	If the limit is exceeded what do I need to do to correct?	Documentation and recording required to prove it has been done
Example: 2a: Growth of dangerous microorganisms in the ingredients due to poor temperature control in the fridge	Fridge must run at no more than 8°C	Yes	Check the temperature of the fridge twice a day	Dispose of ingredients that have been made unsafe by being out of temperature control	Fridge temps to be recorded each day by the cook on duty

Things to Remember...

1. **Ensure you look at every stage in your flow chart for hazards when constructing the table, but bear in mind that there may not be a hazard at every stage. If you can't find one don't panic, just move onto the next.**
2. **'Cleaning' should not be included as a hazard as it is something that should be carried out automatically as a 'prerequisite' and isn't specific to your product.**

Constructing your table:

- Identify the **hazards**; for example the growth of bacteria due to poor temperature control.
- What are the **critical limits** for each hazard; at what measurable point will the hazard make the food unsafe? This could be a temperature, for example, to be

- achieved during cooking. Remember that if it is a specific limit you set yourself you must be able to actually monitor for it!
- Is this hazard a **critical control point**? For example, if there are no *subsequent* stages in your process that will eliminate this particular hazard then it is critical that it is stopped at this point.
 - How will the hazard be **monitored** for? For example if you set yourself a cooking target of 75°C for 2 minutes to kill off dangerous bacteria how are you actually going to check this temperature has been achieved? You should also record **who** is responsible for recording this and ensure they have been trained to do so. You will also need to consider the equipment required; if they will need a temperature probe how will you ensure it is calibrated correctly?

Next steps

Once you have your HACCP plan walk through it. Does it match what you are doing in practise? If not, go back and reassess it. It is sometimes useful to get a fresh pair of eyes to look over your plan for you at this stage.

Monitoring, recording and review

Your plan will need to be kept up to date. If you produce new products or change equipment go back to your plan and see whether it needs changing

You should have some checks you've identified as needing to be carried out, for example taking the temperature of a batch of cooked pies in order to confirm you've cooked them properly. If you have said you will monitor something make sure you do! These records will be assessed by the inspector when they visit. If you don't monitor then an important check is being missed which could impact on the quality and safety of the food you produce.

Remember to review your plan regularly for any changes and update it as necessary. You should look at it annually and make a note when you do.