

Food Safety in School Food Programs, Service and Facilities

Schools across Saskatchewan provide a wide range of food programs. Food safety is a vital component of all programs to protect the health of students and the public.

Introduction

Anyone providing food or drinks for others must do so in a way that prevents contamination and makes sure the food is safe to eat.

The Food Safety Regulations set requirements for food facilities to ensure they operate in a manner that keeps food safe. Food facilities include a wide range of food provision operations, including various food programs in schools.

For personal food safety tips see
[Tips for Safe Food Preparation at
Home or Private Gatherings](#)

Licensing

School food service programs that meet the licensing requirements under [The Food Safety Regulations](#) are issued a licence and routinely inspected. This includes programs that regularly provide food, such as cafeterias, breakfast programs and food studies courses that serve meals to students or the public.

The licensee is responsible for ensuring all requirements of the regulations are followed by everyone using the facilities.

School food service programs that provide limited food service may be exempt from licensing requirements. This may include programs that serve low-risk foods or involve limited food handling, such as special event meals, prepackaged concession foods or bake sales

Unlicensed food facilities are inspected less frequently and on an as needed basis, such as for a complaint or request.

Schools should contact their [local public health inspection office](#) to determine whether their food programs require a licence or qualify for an exemption.

Food Service in Saskatchewan Schools

There is no single delivery model for food programs across Saskatchewan. Diverse opportunities and challenges in each school division can influence how food service programs are run. Local needs, resources and circumstances influence how school divisions and schools design and deliver their programs. Factors that may affect program delivery include:

- Food availability and local food systems
- School facilities and available equipment
- Food prices and purchasing power
- Local partnership opportunities

Flexible, adaptable programs can better meet the needs of students and communities. Many schools also use a combination of delivery models.

Food Program Model Types

- **Regular onsite food preparation and service:** Food is assembled or prepared and served regularly to students, staff, volunteers, and/or the public, such as through cafeterias and breakfast or lunch programs.
- **Occasional onsite food preparation and service:** Food is assembled or prepared and served occasionally, such as at special events or celebrations.
- **Pre-packaged or low risk foods:** Foods provided are prepackaged, such as chips or yogurt cups, or low risk, such as whole fruit.
- **Food from outside providers:** Food or meals are prepared off-site and delivered to school. See below for information on home-based food processors.
- **Food classes/courses:** Foods are prepared by students as part of classroom learning and may be shared within the class or with others, subject to school policies.
- **School gardens, land-based learning:** Foods are grown and/or gathered as part of school garden initiatives or land-based learning opportunities. This may include sourcing, gathering or hunting wild foods.
- **Food donations:** Foods are donated to and distributed within schools. This may include charitable sales of donated foods, such as bake sales.
- **Other activities:** May include foods served at performances, staff events, community fundraisers and catered events.

Food Safety in Schools

Several resources are available to guide schools in the areas of food safety within their programs. Both the [Saskatchewan School Food Nutrition Guidelines](#) and [Nourishing Minds: Eat Well – Learn Well – Live Well](#) include information on food safety in school settings.

Under *The Food Safety Regulations*, individuals who regularly handle food in schools may be required to complete a food safety training course. See the [list of approved food safety training courses](#) in Saskatchewan.

Individuals who handle food occasionally, distribute prepackaged foods or volunteer at school food events are encouraged to learn safe food handling practices by taking an approved course, although this is not a regulatory requirement.

Basic food safety practices for occasional food handlers in school food settings include:

Cleaning

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water.
- Wash and sanitize food contact surfaces and utensils regularly.
- Use a kitchen sanitizer according to the manufacturer's directions, or a bleach solution made with 5 mL (1 tsp.) of bleach and 750 mL of water.

Separating

- Use separate cutting boards and plates for raw meat, poultry and produce to prevent cross-contamination.

Cooking

- Thaw food in the refrigerator.
- Cook food completely.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure food reaches a safe internal temperature.
- Keep hot foods at or above 60°C (140°F).

Chilling

- Keep the refrigerator at 4°C (40°F) or lower.
- Keep the freezer at -18°C (0°F) or lower.
- Store raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood separately from other food and on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours.

Special Considerations and Information

Cultural Practices and Safe Foods

Resources are available for schools on:

- [Cultural Practices and Food](#)
- [First Nations and Metis Traditional Practices and Foods](#)

Donated Foods

Schools may receive food donations from individuals and from food facilities. Food Banks Canada provides [guidance on food donations](#) based on *Canada's Food Guide* and Health Canada's *Healthy Eating Strategy*. Schools may use this resource when accepting and managing food donations.

Foods from Home-Based Food Processors

The Food Safety Regulations set specific requirements for home-based food processors, including requiring foods to be low risk, providing labelling requirements, and restricting where foods may be sold. Foods prepared by home-based food processors cannot be used in a licensed food facility. However, these foods may be sold or distributed in schools through direct-to-consumer sales, provided consumers are informed of the source and all regulatory requirements are met.

Specialized Food Processing

Some school food programs may use specialized food preparation or processing methods, such as fermentation, drying, smoking or canning. These processes require specific knowledge and controls to ensure food safety. For more information, contact your local public health inspection office. Additional resources include:

- [Fermented Food Safety Guidance](#)
- [Smoked Meats Fact Sheet](#) (Nova Scotia)
- [Meat Curing Fact Sheet](#) (Alberta)
- [Water Content and Water Activity](#) (Manitoba)
- [Canning Safety](#) (Health Canada)
- [Canning Foods Safely](#) (FNHA)

Food Safety Incidents

Do not prepare food for others if you are ill, especially if you have had diarrhea or vomiting in the last 48 hours.

Contact 811 if you experience:

- Nausea • vomiting • diarrhea

For more information on public food safety, contact your local public health inspection office. Find a list of offices at: saskatchewan.ca/residents/health/public-health/public-health-inspectors