

A Guide to Home-Based Food Businesses within Merri-bek



Merri-bek City Council allows businesses to operate a domestic kitchen if they can demonstrate compliance with the Food Standards Code Australia and New Zealand and Food Act 1984.

Introduction

The purpose of this customer guide is to provide appropriate information to ensure compliance with the Food Standards Code for home-based food businesses within Merri-bek.

A good kitchen design, fit out and practices within the home will allow for a safe food business to operate with the interest of protecting public health and wellbeing of the local community. The practices involved with preparing food for sale to the public is different to the practices you may use when serving food to your family and friends at home.

Your home kitchen will need to be registered and inspected annually by Merri-bek Council's Environmental Health Officers. This guide covers all aspects of registration and fit out to commencing trade.

Is Your Home Suitable for a Home-Based Food Business?

Establishing whether your home is suitable is the first step.

- Does your kitchen have a double bowl sink?
- Is your home free from pets?
- Are your kitchen surfaces sealed and free from exposed wood?
- Are you aware of the initial registration costs? See Merri-bek's [Food and Health Related Business Registration Fees](#).
- Are you doing small scale, low-medium risk food handling activities?

If your kitchen can meet the above requirements read on for more detailed information about the registration process and more detailed requirements.

You may also require advice or permits from the Merri-bek's Planning and Building Departments prior to lodging registration with Environmental Health. It is recommended that you contact these department on 9240 1111 prior to registering your home-based food business with Environmental Health.

If you are in a rental property you may need to seek prior permission from your landlord and/or body corporate to operate as a home-based food business.

Residential kitchens are designed for domestic use, not for being a place from which to operate a food business. As such, domestic kitchens are typically only suitable for small scale, low to medium risk food handling activities. Large scale and/or high-risk food handling activities should be conducted from a commercial kitchen. Please reach out to the Environmental Health Unit if you are unsure about the scale or risk of your proposed food handling activities.

What are the requirements?

Home-based food businesses must comply with relevant parts of the [Food Standards Code](#), including:

- Standard 3.2.2 - Food Safety Practices and General Requirements
- Standard 3.2.3 Food Premises and Equipment
- Part 1.2 - Labelling and Other Information Requirements

General Requirements

The design and construction of the food premises must:

- (a) be appropriate for the activities for which the premises are used;
- (b) provide adequate space for the activities to be conducted on the food premises and for the fixtures, fittings and equipment used for those activities;
- (c) permit the food premises to be effectively cleaned and, sanitised

To the extent that is practicable:

- (i) exclude dirt, dust, fumes, smoke and other contaminants;
- (ii) not permit the entry of pests; and
- (iii) not provide harbourage for pests.

Water Supply and Sinks

Your home-based food business must have a designated hand wash basin, a food preparation sink as well as a dishwasher. The combination of a double bowl kitchen sink paired with a dishwasher is most suitable.

Food premises must have an adequate supply of potable water. This requirement ensures that water is available for washing food ingredients, cooking, adding to food and drinks, cleaning, sanitising and personal hygiene. Adequate means potable water, available at a sufficient volume, pressure and temperature for all activities carried out at the premises.

Warm water is required for hand washing, personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitising. Food premises must have a sewage and wastewater disposal system that:

- Will effectively dispose of all sewage and wastewater;
- Is constructed and located so that there is no likelihood of the sewage and wastewater polluting the water supply or contaminating food.



This requirement ensures that sewage and wastewater are disposed of effectively. The laundry sink may be used for the filling and emptying of mop buckets. All washing facilities, sinks, dishwasher, floor drains must be connected to the sewer.

Hand Wash Basin

Food handlers must have hand washing facilities within the immediate food preparation area.

Hand washing facilities must be:

- Permanent fixtures
- Connected to a supply of warm running potable water provided through a single outlet and operated with a hands-free device or single lever
- Of a size that allows easy and effective hand washing
- Clearly designated for the sole purpose of washing hands, arms and face
- Supplied with liquid soap and paper hand towels
- Hand washing facilities should be used for the sole purpose of hand washing during commercial food preparation and not obstructed by other equipment

Grease traps

Grease traps intercept grease, silt, oil, sludge and other solids and prevent this waste from entering the public sewerage system. Yarra Valley Water regulate grease trap requirements in Merri-bek. Please contact Yarra Valley Water on 03 9872 1240 or email twapplications@yvw.com.au for further information regarding food business trade waste agreements.

Ventilation

Food premises must have sufficient natural or mechanical ventilation to effectively remove fumes, smoke, steam and vapours from the premises. This is to minimise the likelihood of airborne contamination of food. Natural ventilation is only suitable in premises where there is little or no cooking that generates steam or greasy air. For example, microwaves, toasters, sandwich makers.

Mechanical ventilation systems are recommended above all other cooking equipment that creates steam or grease such as stoves, ovens, hotplates/grills, deep fryers etc.

Lighting

Food premises must have a lighting system that provides sufficient natural or artificial light for the activities conducted on the food premises.



Floors, Walls and Ceilings

Floors must be designed and constructed in a way that is appropriate for the activities conducted on the food premises. Floors must:

- Be able to be effectively cleaned
- Be unable to absorb grease, food particles or water
- Be laid so that there is no pooling of water
- To the extent that is practicable, be unable to provide harbourage for pests

To be able to be effectively cleaned floors should be smooth, free from cracks and crevices, resistant to hot water, steam and/or chemicals.



Walls and ceilings must be designed and constructed in a way that is appropriate for the activities conducted on the premises. Walls and ceilings must be:

- Sealed to prevent the entry of dirt, dust and pests
- Unable to absorb grease, food particles or water
- Able to be easily and effectively cleaned
- To the extent that is practicable, be unable to provide harbourage for pests.

Walls and ceilings need to be free of cracks and crevices. Smooth plasterboard finished with a washable paint is suitable for walls and ceilings. Drop-in ceiling panels are not suitable. Walls behind cooking equipment and wash up areas should be finished with a smooth and durable splash back such as stainless steel, glass or tiles.

Cleaning Equipment and Utensils

A double bowl sink must be provided for the cleaning and sanitising of utensils and equipment. Alternatively, a dish washer may be used for cleaning and sanitising in addition to a single bowl sink. All sinks must be fitted with hot and cold water and must be large enough to immerse the largest piece of equipment used within the business.

The dishwasher must be capable of effectively sanitising equipment at 82°C, alternatively a chemical sanitiser may be introduced into the rinse cycle of the dishwasher. Domestic dishwashers that do not meet the above criteria may also be acceptable if the manufacturers of the machines provide evidence of their efficiency.

Fixtures Fittings and Equipment

Food premises must be adequately equipped to receive, store, process, package and sell safe and suitable food. Food contact surfaces should be smooth, free of cracks, chips, crevices, ridges or grooves. This includes preparation benches, tables, storage shelves, trays and cooking equipment. Suitable surfaces include stainless steel, laminate or glass.

Fixtures, fittings, and equipment must be designed, constructed, located and installed so that:

- There is no likelihood that they will cause food contamination
- They can be easily and effectively cleaned
- Adjacent floors, walls, ceilings and other surfaces can be easily and effectively cleaned

Pets

A food business must not permit animals in areas in which food is handled or stored. This includes pets which can contaminate food with pathogenic organisms as well as physically with hair, urine or faeces. Areas in which food is handled include all indoor areas where food is made or stored and transported, including cats.

Pest Control

The design and construction of food premises must, to the extent that is practicable not permit the entry of pests and not provide harbourage for pests.

Pest proofing measures include:

- Installing fly screen doors
- Covering every window and ventilator opening to the outer air with a fly-wire screen.
- Seal all openings where pipes pass through walls
- Install appropriate flashing/weather strips to the base of all doors

Correct Process, Procedures and Management

Hand Washing

Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and warm running water. Front and backs of hands should be lathered, between your fingers and under your nails.

Food Storage

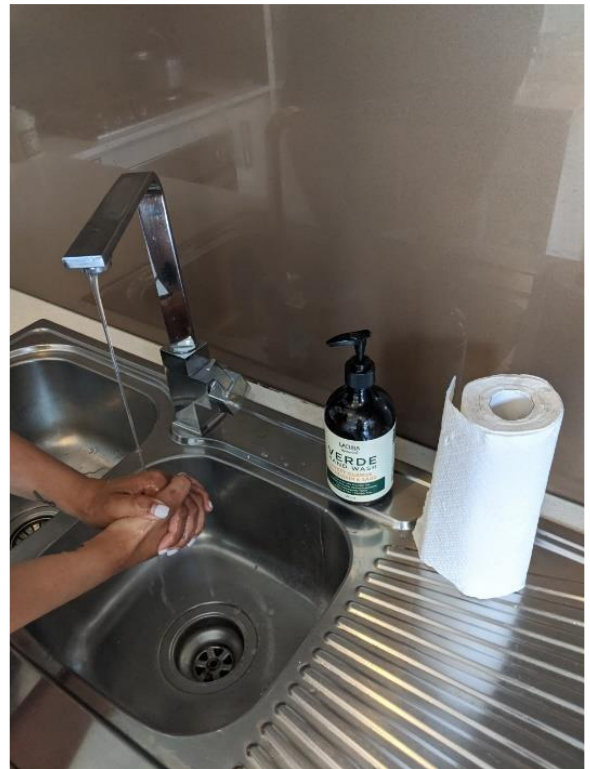
There must be sufficient facilities for the storage of food used for the business including cold storage and dry storage which is separated from personal use food items. Dry ingredients such as flour, rice and the like should be kept in impervious airtight food grade containers with tight-fitting lids on shelving. If the food you prepare or its ingredients require temperature control then you may need to provide a separate fridge or demonstrate that you will have adequate storage in your domestic fridge.

Cleaning

Your home kitchen must maintain a high standard of cleanliness where there is no accumulation of:

- Garbage, except in bins
- Recycled matter, except in recycling bins
- Food waste
- Dirt
- Grease
- Or other visible matter

This includes all areas of the kitchen including food storage and preparation areas.



FoodTrader

Should you wish to trade at events, markets or council nominated foot way and road side trading sites you will need to register for a FoodTrader license. You can apply for a FoodTrader license via the [FoodTrader website](#).

How to Register as a Home-Based Food Business

Before you can start operating your home-based food business refer to the Merri-bek City Council's website to submit your online application - Start and Register a New Food Business. You will need to determine what class your business will be, and whether you will require a Food Safety Supervisor and Food Safety Program. Information and description about the different classes are explained in the online application, however more information can be found on the Department of Health's Website.

Once you have submitted your application to register online, an Environmental Health Officer will contact you to arrange a time for your inspection. If the officer is satisfied with the fit out and practices to be performed at your home-based food business approval will be granted.

For brand new business owners in Merri-bek you may need to apply for planning and building approvals as well as obtain your health license. If you wish to attend a pre-application meeting with all relevant departments please visit [Merri-bek's Business Page](#) to find out how.

Should you have addition queries you can contact us on:

Environmental Health Unit

90 Bell Street Coburg 3058

Phone: 9240 1111

Email environmentalhealth@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Website: www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au