

Home-based food businesses

Health guidance



Home-based food businesses can assist with community fund-raising, be a hobby for extra income or the start of something much larger. The Shire of Carnarvon encourages small food business start-up ventures, which can contribute to the diversity and quality of food products and service in the Gascoyne district such as at farmers and craft markets, community events, retail shops or direct to consumers.

Other than for wholesale horticulture production without further processing, preparing or storing food for sale or selling food from any premises is a food business according to the *Food Act 2008* and requires the business operator to notify their local government or have their food business registered.

Compared to dedicated commercial food premises, home-based food premises often have limitations such as:

- Home kitchens are typically designed for preparing only a few meals per day.
- Home premises usually have limited space for storage and processing of food.
- Many domestic-style food storage cabinets are not well protected from pests.
- Home kitchens usually have limited cooking facilities and limited or no ability to exhaust smoke.
- Home kitchens may or may not comply with the requirements for handwashing facilities (one of the few prescriptive requirements of the *Food Safety Standards* unless an exemption can be given).
- Young children, pets and family members can compromise food safety in some circumstances.
- If any member of the household has a food-borne illness, food and surfaces can become contaminated.

If you wish to start a home-based food business, a Shire Environmental Health Officer will assess your proposal and your home-based food handling areas, which will need to comply with the Australian [Food Safety Standards](#) (Chapter 3 of the Food Standards Code). The standards are largely performance based, meaning that the suitability of the premises is relative to the scale and type of food handling activities proposed.

The *Food Safety Standards* provide for some exemptions that can be applied at home-based (and temporary) premises subject to the local government approval. The possible exemptions are:

- the requirements relating to hand-washing facilities
- the requirements for floor construction other than that the floors are appropriate for the proposed activities and are unlikely to pose a risk of food contamination.

The WA Department of Health's policy on food businesses that operate from premises that are used principally as a private dwelling is that approval for exemptions contained within the Code should only be granted for food businesses that have been classified as 'low risk'. In the commonly used risk classification system, most businesses are medium risk, and low risk is generally confined to the production of non-potentially hazardous foods (e.g. breads, jam) or the buying and selling of pre-packaged foods.

The table overleaf outlines some considerations for various types of home-based food businesses. If the proposal can't be approved at the home-based premises, some other options are:

- To upgrade the home-based food premises to meet the required standard.
- To alter the proposal to suit the premises in a way that can meet the *Food Safety Standards*.
- To hire an existing commercial food premises, e.g. to use their premises outside ordinary operating hours, which may or may not require overnight storage.
- A new food premises can also be designed and constructed for the proposed business.

Home-based business type	Considerations
All types	<p>Subject to compliance with the Food Safety Standards including individual premises suitability and hygiene assessment relative to the proposed activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business scale appropriate to the home premises • Sufficient pest-proof food storage including fridge and freezer space in addition to personal requirements • Adequate food processing space and equipment • Adequate cooking ability where relevant including the ability to effectively exhaust smoke and steam • Kitchen construction designed to be easily and effectively cleaned • Handwashing facility of adequate size with warm water delivered through common spout (e.g. flick mixer tap) designated for the sole purpose of hand washing and close to the food preparation area (e.g. <5m)—unless approved otherwise. • Adequate supply of water that is acceptable for human consumption unless the food business can demonstrate their water will not adversely affect food safety for the purposes for which the water will be used or unless no water is needed (generally needed for handwashing). • Food transportation equipment to protect food from contamination and where relevant maintain temperature control • Appropriate exclusion of young children, animals and sick persons where it might adversely affect food safety • Appropriate food safety skills and knowledge – refer to Shire of Carnarvon information sheet on food safety training.
Cottage manufacturing/ repacking (small scale food production)	<p>Pre-packaged products are required to meet the retail food labelling requirements and the requirements for manufacturers (recall plan, product shelf-life etc). Refer to Dept Health guideline: https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Thinking-about-starting-a-food-manufacturing-business and Shire of Carnarvon information sheet on retail food product labelling.</p>
Food preparation for temporary food stalls or mobile trading	<p>Simple, one-dish offerings are more likely to be within the storage and preparation capacity of the home-based kitchen compared to menu-based offerings. It is also an opportunity to showcase a great dish. Cooking food on-site for immediate consumption is generally safer and preferred to earlier cooking, due to the risks of microbial contamination after cooking. This is also an opportunity to showcase the cooking method.</p>
Home-based catering	<p>Limited size of catering service relative to capacity of home-based premises. If food is to be handled, cooked or served off-site, appropriate off-site equipment and skills will be required.</p>
Home-based hospitality (e.g. B&B/Farm stay)	<p>The catering requirements will need to be within the capability of the residential kitchen proposed. Larger accommodation facilities may need a commercial kitchen building.</p>
Home-based childcare	<p>This could be a food business if food provision is included in the consideration of the fee.</p>
Non-profit fund-raisers	<p>If the fund-raising business is exempt from registration, the person or entity raising the money is required to put in a notification form that includes each location where the food is made, according to the <i>Food Regulations 2009</i>. The food provided and the associated premises and activities, are required to comply with the Food Standards Code.</p>

The following are not regarded as a food business:

- Cooking demonstrations where the participants supply the ingredients, help with the food preparation and then consume it,
- In-home support services for an individual.

For further information, contact the Shire of Carnarvon Environmental Health team on 08 9941 0000 or by email to health@carnarvon.wa.gov.au.