

EHO Inspection Readiness Checklist for Hospitality

Go through every area an Environmental Health Officer will assess — and find out where your kitchen stands before they do.

EHO inspections can happen at any time, with no notice required. An Environmental Health Officer has the legal authority to enter any food business during trading hours and inspect any area of your premises. This checklist covers the eight core areas inspectors assess under Irish food safety legislation. Tick every item that your business currently has in place — any gap is a potential finding.

● Critical — can result in closure or prosecution ● High — frequently results in improvement notices

● Standard — part of every routine inspection

1

HACCP System & Food Safety Documentation

Inspectors will ask to see this first



Written HACCP plan is in place and up to date

Critical

A HACCP-based food safety management system is a legal requirement for all food businesses under EC Regulation 852/2004. The plan must identify hazards, critical control points, corrective actions, and monitoring procedures.



HACCP records are current and accessible

Critical

Temperature logs, cleaning records, and delivery checks must be completed daily and stored where the EHO can inspect them. Gaps in records — even short ones — are frequently noted as non-compliance.



Food Safety Management System reviewed within the last 12 months

High Risk

Your HACCP plan must be reviewed whenever your menu, processes, or premises change — and at least annually. An outdated plan that doesn't reflect current operations is treated as non-compliant.



Corrective action records are documented

High Risk

When a CCP is breached — for example, a fridge temperature is found to be too high — the corrective action taken must be recorded. Verbal-only responses are not

sufficient.



Traceability records are maintained for all food products

Standard

You must be able to trace all food back to its supplier. Delivery dockets, invoices, and supplier records should be kept for a minimum of 3 years and available on request.

2

Temperature Control & Monitoring

One of the most common areas for EHO findings



Fridges and cold stores operating at or below 5°C

Critical

Cold storage must maintain temperatures at or below 5°C for high-risk food. Inspectors will check the actual temperature at the time of inspection, not just your records.



Cooked and hot-held food maintained at 63°C or above

Critical

Food held hot for service must be kept at 63°C minimum. Temperature probes should be calibrated and used regularly, and probe checks should be recorded.



Temperature logs are completed at least twice daily

High Risk

Fridge and freezer temperatures should be logged at the start and end of each trading day at minimum. Sporadic or incomplete temperature logs are one of the most frequent findings in EHO inspections.



Temperature probes are calibrated and cleaned between uses

High Risk

A probe used on raw meat and then used on cooked food without being disinfected is a cross-contamination risk. Probes should be cleaned with probe wipes and a calibration record should be maintained.



Frozen food stored at -18°C or below

Standard

Freezers must operate at -18°C or colder. Partially thawed food stored back in the freezer, or freezers running too warm, are regularly flagged during inspections.

3

Personal Hygiene & Staff Training

Inspectors may speak directly with your staff



All food handlers hold a current food safety certificate

Critical

Every person handling food must have completed accredited food safety training appropriate to their role. FSAI-recognised certifications (e.g. HACCP Level 1/2) are the standard expected. Records of training must be available.



Staff know what to do if they have a food-borne illness

Any staff member suffering from vomiting, diarrhoea, jaundice, or an infected skin condition must be excluded from food handling. Staff must know to report symptoms immediately and this policy should be in writing.

Critical

☐ **Correct handwashing procedure in place and practiced**

High Risk

Dedicated handwashing sinks must be available in food preparation areas, stocked with liquid soap and paper towels. Inspectors may observe handwashing technique during an inspection and will check sinks are not being used for food prep.

☐ **Protective clothing policy is followed by all staff**

Standard

Food handlers should wear clean protective clothing, hair should be tied back or covered, and jewellery (other than a plain wedding band) should not be worn in food preparation areas.

☐ **Training records are current and available for inspection**

Standard

Certificates and training records must be stored on-site and available on request. Records for staff who have left should be kept for a minimum of 12 months.

4

Cleaning & Sanitation

Inspectors will check surfaces, equipment and records

☐ **Written cleaning schedule is in place for all areas**

High Risk

A documented cleaning schedule should assign responsibility for each task, specify frequency (daily, weekly, periodic), and list the cleaning products to be used. Verbal cleaning rosters do not satisfy this requirement.

☐ **Cleaning records are completed and signed off**

High Risk

Completed cleaning logs — signed by the person who carried out the task and a supervisor — demonstrate due diligence. Unsigned or inconsistent records are frequently flagged.

☐ **Food contact surfaces are clean and in good condition**

Critical

Chopping boards, prep surfaces, and utensils must be clean, free from cracks or deep scoring, and made from food-grade materials. Damaged surfaces that cannot be properly cleaned must be replaced.

☐ **Colour-coded chopping boards are in use and correctly used**

High Risk

Separate boards for raw meat, cooked food, fish, vegetables, bread, and dairy should be in place. Cross-contamination caused by incorrect use of boards is a common cause of food poisoning and a regular finding in inspections.



Cleaning chemicals are correctly stored and labelled

Standard

Chemicals must be stored away from food, in clearly labelled containers, with COSHH data sheets available. Chemicals must never be stored in food containers or unlabelled bottles.

5

Pest Control

Evidence of pests can result in immediate closure



A contracted pest control provider carries out regular visits

High Risk

Most food businesses should have a professional pest control contractor visiting at least quarterly. Evidence of a current pest control contract is expected by EHOs — particularly in urban premises or those near waste storage areas.



Pest control reports and visit records are on file

High Risk

Pest control reports from every visit should be kept on file. If a visit has identified activity or laid bait, the follow-up actions must be documented and carried out.



No evidence of pest activity visible on premises

Critical

Droppings, gnaw marks, smear marks, or live/dead pests anywhere on the premises — particularly in food storage or preparation areas — will result in a critical finding. Evidence of pests is one of the most serious outcomes in an EHO inspection.



External entry points are proofed against pests

Standard

Gaps around pipes, doors, ventilation openings, and drains should be proofed to prevent pest entry. Door brushes or bristle strips on external doors are recommended for ground-floor kitchens.

6

Allergen Management & Labelling

Increasingly scrutinised — and legally critical



All 14 major allergens are identified across the menu

Critical

EU Food Information Regulation (FIR) requires that the presence of any of the 14 major allergens is communicated to customers for all food sold. This must be accurate, up to date, and consistent across menus, online platforms, and specials boards.



Staff can accurately communicate allergen information to customers

Critical

All customer-facing and kitchen staff must be trained on the 14 allergens and know how to respond to customer queries. Training records should reflect this. Inspectors may ask staff directly about allergens.



Allergen matrix or written record is maintained for all dishes

Critical

A written allergen matrix for every dish on the menu — clearly showing which of the 14 allergens is present — must be maintained and kept current whenever the menu changes.



Pre-packed food is correctly labelled

High Risk

Any food packaged on-site and sold pre-packed — sandwiches, salads, baked goods — must comply with EU labelling regulations, including allergen declarations and ingredient lists.

7

Food Storage & Stock Rotation

Common source of both EHO findings and food waste



All open and prepared food is covered, labelled, and dated

High Risk

Any food removed from its original packaging, prepared in advance, or left over from service must be covered, clearly labelled with contents, and marked with the date it was opened or prepared. Unlabelled food in storage is a standard finding.



Raw and cooked food is stored separately

Critical

Raw meat, poultry, and fish must be stored below cooked and ready-to-eat food to prevent drip contamination. Raw proteins should be on the lowest shelves in refrigerators and never stored above prepared food.



FIFO (first in, first out) stock rotation is practiced

High Risk

Older stock must be used before newer deliveries. New deliveries should be placed behind existing stock. Expired or close-to-expiry product in use during an inspection is a direct finding.



No food stored directly on the floor

Standard

All food — including bulk dry goods — must be stored off the floor on shelving or pallets. Food stored on the floor is a common finding, particularly in dry stores and walk-in refrigerators.



Delivery checks are recorded at point of receipt

Standard

Food deliveries must be checked on arrival — temperature of chilled/frozen items, condition of packaging, best before/use by dates. Checks must be recorded. Accepting a delivery outside of safe temperature limits without recording it is a compliance failure.

8

Premises & Equipment Condition

Structural issues are noted even if food handling is correct



All surfaces are in good repair and easy to clean

High Risk

Walls, floors, ceilings, and work surfaces in food preparation areas must be smooth, non-absorbent, and free from cracks, chips, or damage. Damaged surfaces that cannot be properly cleaned are flagged in every inspection.



Adequate lighting is in place throughout food areas

Standard

Food preparation and storage areas must be adequately lit to allow safe food handling. Broken or insufficient lighting in kitchens and cold stores is regularly noted.



Ventilation is adequate to prevent condensation and grease build-up

High Risk

Kitchen extraction systems should be in good working order, cleaned regularly (at least annually by a professional), and records of cleaning should be maintained. Poor ventilation leading to grease accumulation is a significant fire and hygiene risk.



Waste is managed and bins are clean and covered

Standard

Waste bins in food areas must have lids, be lined, and be emptied regularly. External waste storage must be in a covered area and away from food delivery or storage zones. An overflowing or malodorous waste area is a standard finding.



Equipment is clean, maintained, and calibrated where required

High Risk

Ovens, fridges, dishwashers, and other equipment must be clean and in working order. Any equipment that is broken, damaged, or out of calibration — particularly temperature-critical equipment — must be repaired or taken out of service immediately.

How to Read Your Score

36–40 ✓

Inspection Ready — Your kitchen is in strong shape. Maintain your records, keep training current, and schedule a review any time your menu or team changes significantly.

25–35 ✓

Some Areas to Strengthen — You have a solid base but gaps that an EHO could flag. Prioritise any unticked Critical items immediately and address High Risk items within the next 4 weeks.

0–24 ✓

Significant Exposure — Multiple gaps across core inspection areas. If an EHO visited today, you would likely receive an improvement notice and potentially face more serious action on Critical items. A full food safety review is strongly recommended.

Not inspection ready? We can help.

Beacon's food safety consultants work with Irish hospitality businesses to get inspection-ready fast — gap analysis, HACCP documentation, allergen matrices, staff training, and full pre-inspection reviews.

Book a Free Consultation

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This checklist is for reference purposes only and does not constitute legal or food safety advice.

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