



TEACHER NOTES

SR1. A recipe for disaster

This is a text-based activity.

The fictitious situation aims to highlight some of the errors, misconceptions and mistakes that people may make when preparing food. The pupils are asked to identify mistakes and explain the dangers. The meeting could be acted out by pupils.

Some of the errors include:

Joy - will prepare food whilst having a cough and cold; thus possibly transmitting bacteria by droplet infection. Individuals suffering such symptoms should not be allowed to prepare food.

Gill - has purchased dented and slightly damaged cans and foods just out of date. It is possible that dented or damaged cans may have allowed the entry of air containing microbes and, as such, the process of decay may have begun. Date marking on products can be confusing (see margin box).

Rahat - has purchased eggs with cracked shells and intends to use these in dishes that will be eaten raw; raw eggs sometimes contain bacteria that cause food poisoning. These bacteria can only be killed by thorough cooking. Eggs with cracked shells are particularly susceptible to bacterial invasion.

Anil - intends to cook some foods well before the start of the event and store them at room temperature for some time before consumption. Room temperature provides ideal conditions for microbial growth, thus leaving food in these conditions may result in a massive rise in bacterial numbers and result in food poisoning.

Liz - will stack the dirty dishes from the first course next to clean crockery, cutlery and raw fruit; cooked leftovers will provide suitable breeding grounds for microbes. If waste food is left near raw food for any length of time there is the possibility of cross infection. There is one sink in the kitchen; ideally there should be a separate sink for general washing of hands as opposed to washing of food and utensils.

Anil - the desserts will be stored in the refrigerator on a shelf below the raw meat intended for a later event; there is great potential here for cross contamination between raw and cooked foods. This is enhanced with the possibility of blood/juices from the raw meat dripping onto the cooked food. Raw meat should always be carefully wrapped and stored *below* other foods. In shops and restaurants, cooked and raw products should not be stored together. Recommendations suggest that, where possible, raw and cooked food should be served by different assistants.

Rahat - intends to put food onto the tables more than 3 hours before it will be eaten; only some of the food will be covered. 3 hours is the absolute maximum that food should be left in this type of situation before consumption; storage at low temperatures is desirable. The delay between production and consumption only allows for the growth of microbes. All food, even raw salad, should be adequately covered to prevent flies, etc. landing on the food.

KS3/4

science or food technology

Timing - various

A possible homework exercise if food safety has already been discussed; a discussion activity if food safety has not been covered.

Pupil activity sheet SR1 accompanies this activity.

A 'Use by' date is marked on highly perishable foods, i.e. those foods which will go 'off' quickly. Keeping and eating the food beyond the Use by date could be a health risk. However, it is possible to extend the 'eat by' of some foods by cooking or freezing the food once at home, e.g. freezing fresh meat.

Most foods are less perishable and carry a 'Best before' date. When this date has passed it does not mean that the food has suddenly become unfit for consumption. It means that the food may no longer be at its very best. It is important to remember that date marking is often accompanied by storage instructions and these should be followed carefully since non compliance may affect the quality and eating life of the product. The MAFF booklet 'Understanding food labels', number 3 in the Food Sense series, is very useful.

The social events committee at the local school are meeting to plan an important social event in the school calendar. They have the responsibility of organising the Summer fete and buffet lunch at which many pupils, teachers, parents and governors will be present. You have decided to go and listen in on the conversation of their final meeting the day before the lunch.

José: Right everyone. Are we ready to start the meeting?

Anil: Yes! I think everyone is here!

Liz: Joy isn't here! She's coughing and sneezing all over the place! But don't worry, nothing will keep her away from helping us tomorrow no matter how sick she feels!

José: It's better for her to be here tomorrow than at this meeting. We can do this business without her. Now Gill, how are you and Rahat getting on with the shopping?

Gill: Well, I know we are on a tight budget for this event. I'm a good shopper and I can spot the bargains. I managed to buy a lot of food by choosing the dented and slightly damaged canned foods which were on a special shelf at the supermarket.

Rahat: Yes, and I saved money by buying the eggs at half price because some of the shells were cracked. It doesn't matter about the shells because we're going to make mayonnaise from the eggs.

Gill: I also bought some foods that were just out of date and so were cheaper. I checked them by smelling them and looking at them. They seemed fine.

José: All sounds good to me! Anil have you finalised the menu yet?

Anil: We're almost there. We're definitely having those cooked chicken pieces. They always go down well. Because the kitchen is so small and we only have one oven, I'm going to cook the chicken, sausage rolls, quiches, etc. first thing in the morning and put them out of everyone's way on that top shelf above the door.

Liz: Yes, space is a bit of a problem. As the dirty dishes accumulate, they will have to be stacked next to the crockery, cutlery and fruit that's waiting to go out with the puddings. That way the one sink will still be free for all the other uses.

José: How are the puddings coming along then?

Anil: That's quite easy. All of them are going to be cold and they're going to stay in the big fridge in the corner after they're prepared until there's enough space to move them. There's only just enough room. The day after the buffet lunch, someone else is organising a barbecue. I've told them they can put their meat, etc. on the top two shelves in the fridge after they've done their shopping today. That leaves all the lower part for our desserts.

José: Aren't we all going to miss out on the entertainments if we're having to put food out?

Rahat: No, we've thought about that. We can get into the dining room about three hours before we're due to eat. Almost everything can be put out on the tables then. Don't worry, we've got a few large paper tablecloths that can cover it all except the salads - but they don't really need covering.

José: Good! It sounds like it's a recipe for a really enjoyable day. Well done everyone!!

You are very worried by what you have heard. It sounds much more like a recipe for a disaster than for a successful event. You feel you must talk to the committee and point out and explain all the ways in which you think they will really be cooking up a danger to everyone's health.