

Delivery

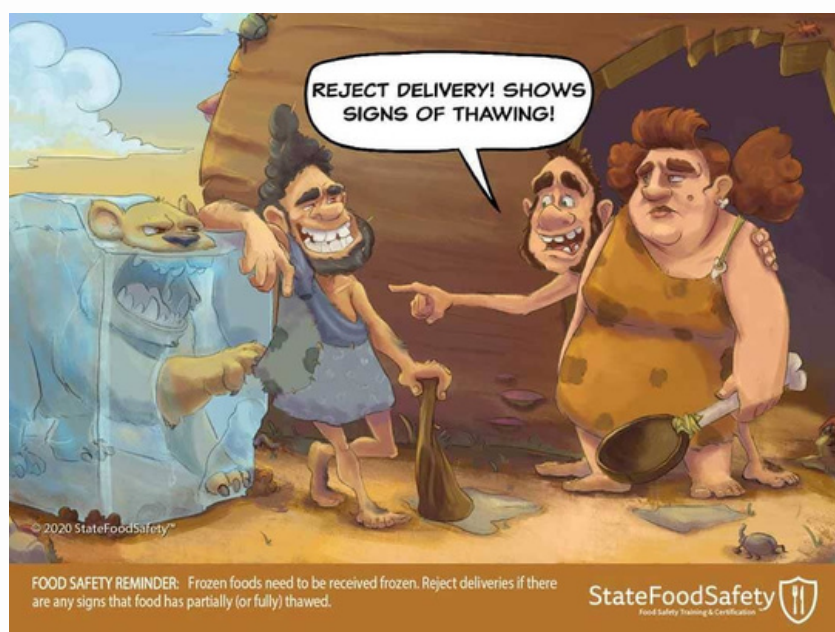
Delivering your products to a retailer or consumer can feel like the last stage of your activities, but food safety doesn't stop at the kitchen door. As a food business operator you need to ensure that your products remain safe for the consumer and are in prime condition during transit and at the point of delivery when they leave your care.

Boxes or packaging

Following production, your finished products may be looking their best in their packaging, but consider how they will fair when they are transported. If you are delivering locally yourself, you will be directly overseeing your products during transit so can ensure their quality on arrival. If you start to use a mail order system or third-party courier to deliver your products you will need specialist packaging to keep your products within safe temperature limits during transit and to ensure the food contact packaging will not be compromised if the products are moving about in a courier van and being handled multiple times. So, as well the actual product packaging, consider any requirements for an outer box and whether it is strong enough to enable products to be kept in the best possible condition throughout their journey to retailer or consumer.

Temperature

You may consider using insulated polystyrene/wool inserts/cool boxes packed with ice blocks pre-frozen gel packs if your products are chilled. Supply of frozen products via a timed courier (normally next day guaranteed delivery for chilled products) tends not to be attempted without use of a frozen courier, although some specialist packaging options do exist. If using an ambient courier, it is possible to undertake transit trials (normally undertaken in warm, summer weather), where packed products are sent to your home address and on receipt checked to confirm that temperature on delivery has been achieved. Alternatively, trial packed products can be held at warm, ambient temperature at and beyond the guaranteed delivery period and temperatures checked to validate the method of packaging. Data loggers can also be used in this respect (a thermometer capable of recording temperatures on delivery and downloadable onto a PC).



Remember!

Frozen foods should be delivered at -18°C or below
Chilled foods should be delivered at 8°C or below
with a target of below 5°C



Delivery

Vehicle

A refrigerated vehicle would be the best way of delivering chilled or frozen products, but can be very costly. If you are delivering yourself, you may want to check the temperature of your products before handing over to ensure they are still within safe temperature limits depending on whether they are fresh or frozen. You can do this by using an infrared thermometer to record the outside temperature on frozen products. Obtaining documents to confirm service level agreements for hauliers and couriers would also be deemed to be good practice for selecting suitable contractors.

Ensure your vehicle is clean, dry and debris free when delivering your products to customers. The safety of your products can be compromised if they are transported in a messy or unclean vehicle and the packaging can be damaged more easily. This will also have an impact on your reputation if your products do not look in prime condition on arrival and even may be rejected by a customer if not in good condition.

Also consider the outside of your vehicle. As a food manufacturer, yourself and your vehicle presents a certain image of how your products can be perceived by others and impact the reputation of your organisation so ensure both you and your vehicle are clean and tidy when interacting with customers or delivering to retailers.

Mixed deliveries with non-food items are undesirable and if unavoidable, should be undertaken with clear segregation in transit. Also avoid transporting of food alongside other items that can result in food tainting (such as chemicals, resins and oils).

Delivery note and record keeping

Create a delivery note to accompany your products especially when delivering to retail. This should be in duplicate and include the date and time of delivery, batch number of good delivered and a temperature check taken at the time of delivery. The delivery note should be signed by the person receiving the delivery that they are happy with the condition of the goods as they are being handed over.

Noting the batch number on the picking list or delivery note and keeping records of where each batch has gone will enable you to trace your products to different retailers in the event of complaints or the need to do a recall on your products. Larger companies are expected to have these systems in place and it is a requirement for certification standards such as SALSA, where tests for product traceability and recall will be required to be evidenced on an annual basis.

