STOCK CONTROL

Effective stock control is an important part of managing food safety.

SAFEY POINTS	WHY?	HOW DO YOU DO THIS?
Review your sales and estimate how much of each product you need to keep in stock.	Working through this allows you to plan for your specific needs.	• Review your sales regularly and how it affects your need for stock.
Plan ahead to make sure you have the right amount of stock and order carefully.	Not having too much stock is best for food safety – and your profits.	• Plan the stock you need to last until the next delivery. • Do a stock check before placing an order.
Check all stock when it is delivered to make sure that: • it is within its 'use by' date and there is enough time to enable it to be sold by this date • it has been kept cold enough • it has not gone off • the stock is clean and not damaged, e.g. throw away any punctured vacuum packs, swollen packs or badly dented cans and check that tops are secure on bottles and jars and seals are unbroken	These checks are all to make sure that food is safe to sell. Damaged packaging could mean that food will not be safe to eat. Swollen or 'blown' packs can be a sign that bacteria have grown in food or drinks. If bottles or jars have been opened, or if seals have been broken, the food or drink might not be safe to eat.	• Train your staff in what to look for when checking deliveries. How do you check deliveries? • Have a written agreement with your supplier about your delivery requirements. • Carry out spot checks on the deliveries yourself. • Use the diary to record any issues or problems with deliveries e.g. packs of the same product are delivered together but have different 'use by' or 'best before' dates.

DATE CODES	WHAT THEY MEAN
'Use by'	'Use by' means exactly that. You must not sell any food or drink after the end of the 'use by' date shown on the label. Even if it looks and smells fine, food after this date could put your customers' health at risk and cause food poisoning. It is illegal to sell food after its 'use by' date. You will usually find a 'use by' date on food that goes off quickly, such as milk, soft cheese, ready-prepared salads, cooked meats and smoked fish. It is also important to follow any storage instructions given on food labels, otherwise the food might not last until the 'use by' date. Usually food with a 'use by' date needs to be kept in the fridge.

STOCK CONTROL

Continued

DATE CODES	WHAT THEY MEAN
'Best before'	'Best before' dates are usually used on food that lasts longer, such as frozen, dried or canned food. It should be safe to eat food after the 'best before' date, but the food will no longer be at its best. After this date, the food might begin to lose its flavour and texture and ideally should be removed from sale. Some products, such as bread, carry a different style of 'best before' date, e.g. best before 20 December (2). The number in brackets is how many days before the 'best before' date the manufacturer recommends it should be sold. So, in this example, that would be by the end of 18 December. Eggs are an exception – they must be sold at least seven days before the 'best before' date. It is illegal to sell eggs after this.

MANAGE IT

Regularly rotate stock and throw away any food that has passed its 'use by' date or is clearly unfit to eat e.g. mouldy. Check 'use by' dates every day as part of your closing checks.	• Put products with the earlier dates at the front of displays, so that older stock is sold first. This helps to avoid waste. • Train your staff in stock control and make sure they know in what order to display foods and where to put food if it is removed from sale. • Check regularly that stock control is being carried out effectively. • Record stock checks in the diary. • If you have lots of products in stock that are close to their 'use by' date, consider reducing the price to sell more before the date. This means you will have to throw away fewer products. • Throw away eggs seven days before the 'best before' date.

WHAT TO DO IF THINGS GO WRONG	HOW TO STOP THIS HAPPENING AGAIN
If you find that food that has passed its 'use by' date has not been thrown away, throw it away immediately or place in a special area if being returned to a supplier. If you do not think that a food delivery has been handled safely, reject the delivery if possible. Do not put the food on sale. Contact your supplier immediately.	• Review your ordering process. • Review your stock rotation system. • Review your agreement with your supplier. • Train staff again on this safe method. • Improve staff supervision.

Write down what went wrong and what you did about it in your diary