There are potential risks associated with doggy bags provided to customers, for food not consumed at the restaurant or catering site. Restaurant and catering businesses should be aware of these risks and how they can be minimised.

Food purchased by a customer at a restaurant becomes the property of that customer. It is not illegal to provide doggy bags and it may be seen as poor customer service if a restaurateur bans doggy bags. In the interests of public health, both your staff and your customers should be aware of the risks associated with the practice of taking away uneaten food from a restaurant in doggy bags for human consumption.

**Risks of doggy bags**

Doggy bags differ from normal takeaway foods, because takeaway foods are intended for immediate consumption and served in a takeaway container by the food business at the appropriate temperature. That is- hot foods are served hot at 60°C or above and cold foods served cold at 5°C or below.

Food for doggy bags can be exposed to the following hazards:

- temperature abuse (4 hours or more in the temperature danger zone of between 5°C and 60°C)
- unhygienic handling by the consumer
- contamination from other food-borne pathogens such as Salmonella
- cross contamination between cooked and uncooked foods.

**Minimise the risk**

If a customer requests a doggy bag, the risks may be minimised by:

- Having a set procedure for providing doggy bags and instructing staff on this procedure (e.g. write the date and, if practicable, put a code on the container and record in an appropriate record book. Recording this information may be helpful in the case of a consumer taking legal action against a licensee for selling unsafe food. The records can demonstrate responsible actions were taken on the part of the proprietor.

- Transferring the food into a new, food-grade container.

- Having an instruction sticker or leaflet to accompany the food that explains the risks of doggy bags and sets suitable storage and reheating conditions for the food. A template sheet of example instruction stickers is provided on page 2, which may be printed and attached to ‘doggy bag’ containers.

**For further information**

Queensland Health have a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety. These fact sheets can be accessed at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).
Food safety information for doggy bags