




Food Safety Conversation No15: Vac Packing

FS.SC.015.04

Key Learning	What You Need To Know	
<p>Vac Packing machines are a complex piece of equipment and must be kept clean and clearly labelled as either for “raw” or “ready to eat” foods</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Separate vacuum packing machines MUST be used and clearly labelled for “raw” or “ready-to-eat” foods only <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum packing bags used for raw or ready-to eat foods must be stored separately and ideally within reach of the designated vacuum packer and be clearly labelled. <input type="checkbox"/> Only those listed on the Authorised User List (after completing training) are permitted to use and clean the vacuum packing machines. <input type="checkbox"/> Close attention should be paid to the hidden areas and removable plates, and the minimum contact time on the sanitiser observed. <input type="checkbox"/> Good personal hygiene is important at all times, and food handlers MUST wash their hands thoroughly before and after using the vacuum packing machines. <input type="checkbox"/> Where possible, direct handling of the food should be kept to a minimum. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure every packet is suitably and sufficiently sealed with a tight fit round the food and the seal intact. Check packets for excess air and/or leaks to minimise the risk of contamination and subsequent growth of bacteria. <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum packed ready-to-eat high-risk food must be stored at a maximum of +5°C or below. <input type="checkbox"/> Date labelling (shelf-life) should not exceed 7 days from date and time of preparation for vacuum packed foods stored between +1°C - +5°C, and 6 month for foods stored at -18°C. Ireland Only – 3 days for chilled and 3 months for frozen. <input type="checkbox"/> Clear ‘production’ and ‘use-by’ dates should be put on all packets using the Compass date labels. <input type="checkbox"/> Any out of date chilled and frozen vacuum-packed products must be discarded, even if the food appears acceptable to the senses. <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum packers must be serviced annually by a competent engineer, and records retained on file. 	 
HACCP Stages	Colleague Validation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Stages 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why is there a need to have separate raw and ready-to-eat vacuum packers? 2. Should raw and ready-to-eat vacuum packers and packaging materials be clearly labelled? 3. All food handlers who may use the vacuum packers appropriately trained, and understand the cross-contamination risks and hazards associated with vacuum packers? 4. Are the vacuum packers being adequately cleaned before and after use? 	
		More Information
		<p>More information can be found within the Good Hygiene Practice Guide No: 15 Vac Packing and the HSE website</p>