



Food for Life Served Here Bronze Caterer User Guide

This guide is for anyone involved in achieving the Bronze Food for Life Served Here Certification. It explains what our standards are, why they exist and how to achieve them. For a thorough and detailed copy of our standards, please refer to our **handbook**



Welcome to Sustainable Catering at Food for Life!

As part of the Soil Association, we use our experience to support governments and local authorities to work across the supply chain with farmers and businesses developing practical solutions. We collaborate with the public to create and amplify a powerful voice, challenging the status quo for better food for all.

New to Sustainable Catering? What does this guide cover?

No matter what sector you're in, who you cater for, or the size of your operation, Food for Life Served Here can help. The certification process enables caterers to further sustainability approaches, identify cost saving, and bring a refreshed vision into the kitchen. Becoming Food for Life Served Here certified helps to build upon your reputation as a provider of quality food that protects the environment, as well as more satisfied customers and staff.

You'll become part of a growing movement of 6,500 sites with committed caterers across the country, serving over 1.3 million Served Here certified meals every day. Your dedication and passion are crucial to changing the food we eat and the world we live in.

This guide is a quick and easy reference for Food for Life Served Here certification at bronze level. It covers a brief overview of the 13 standards, and how to achieve them.

Each page will tell you what the standard is, why it's important and how to meet it. There will also be helpful hints and tips.

By familiarising yourself with this guide, you will build confidence in understanding the benefits of our standards, and how they relate to the food you are serving every day, and the positive effect this will have on your diners and your catering teams.

Alternatively we also have the full Food for Life Served Here Handbook.



Food for Life Served Here Caterer User Guide

The Standards



Food For Life Served Here





Standard 1.0

Caterers in state and grant-maintained schools, early years settings, hospitals and care homes can demonstrate their compliance with national standards or guidelines on food and nutrition.

Why is it important?

Food and nutrition standards help to ensure that your diners receive the food they need to be nourished and healthy.

How do I meet this standard?

If applicable, you will need to show that your menu complies with the appropriate food and/or nutrition standards where you operate.

You can do this by:

- Uploading a copy of your menu cycle for the site that has been nominated for verification
- Uploading a copy of any checklists which you have completed to review your compliance OR a signed self-declaration (you will find a blank copy of this on the resources tab on the portal)

*Please note the regional differences in standards and guidelines on food and nutrition.

Helpful reminder

The online portal has templates you can use to support you to meet this standard.



Hint

We can offer nutritional guideline support, along with training in nutritional analysis, balanced scorecard, UN Sustainable Development Goals reporting, and Natasha's Law labelling guidance.



Standard 1.1

All suppliers have been verified to ensure they apply appropriate food safety standards.

Why is it important?

Food safety is paramount. As a caterer and buyer, you have an important role in verifying this by ensuring that all your suppliers have an effective food safety system in place, based on HACCP principles.

How do I meet this standard?

By uploading a completed and signed Supplier Overview Checklist, listing all your food suppliers (you will find the Supplier Overview Checklist on the resources tab on the portal).

Helpful reminder

We run a Sustainable Supplier Scheme. If you need new suppliers or can't find a product you need, let us know and we can help source compliant products.



Hint

It's useful for us to see your Supplier Overview early in the verification process, as we use this document to assess some of the other standards.





Standard 1.2

At least 75% of the dishes on your menu are cooked from scratch. This can be either on site or at a local hub kitchen.

Why is it important?

Cooking from scratch enables access to more minimally processed foods for diners. When preparing food from scratch it gives you the opportunity to champion and celebrate your skilled kitchen teams and gives you, as a caterer, more control over what goes into the food.

How do I meet this standard?

- Scratch cooking refers to the preparation of meals based on fresh, whole, and minimally processed ingredients.
- The first step is to upload a copy of your menu cycle from the nominated verification site. (Note that you may have already done this if standard 1.0 applies to you).
- Upload a completed Cooked from Scratch Menu Checker for the menu (you will find the Cooked from Scratch Menu Checker on the resources tab on the portal, with instructions on how to complete it).
- Once we've received your Menu Checker, we will ask for a selection of your recipes to verify the information you've submitted.

Helpful reminder

We offer Menu Development and Reformulation training, so you're not alone if you need help making changes.



Hint

When completing the Cooked from Scratch menu checker, you can select Unsure, if you don't know whether a dish is classed as cooked from scratch or not. Your Certification Officer will then be able to advise.

Standard 1.3

Demonstrate that you are prioritising serving vegetarian or vegan meals and/or more vegetables and pulses across your menu.

Why is it important?

Eating too much meat and dairy is having a significant impact on the climate, biodiversity, and human health. The impact is even higher from animals that have been intensively farmed.

The NHS recommends that a healthy diet should be based around whole, minimally processed foods, with plenty of vegetables, pulses, wholegrains, fruits, nuts, and seeds. Meat, dairy products, and fish can be an important part of a healthy diet, but we need to rethink how we produce these foods and how much of them we eat.

We believe that we should be eating less but better meat and dairy. Caterers can improve the health and sustainability of their menus by reducing meat and dairy overall, and by choosing organic or higher welfare wherever possible.

How do I meet this standard?

We will check the previously uploaded copy of your menu cycle and require evidence of either -

Option 1

- 50% of your main lunchtime meals across the whole menu are:
 - Vegetarian or vegan and/or
 - Have been reformulated so that at least one third of the meat/fish content is replaced with pulses or vegetables

Option 2

- Your lunch menu is meat-free at least one day per week.

If you choose option 1, we will request you upload the recipes to demonstrate this.

If you go with option 2, we will verify this is apparent on the menus. (Note: we may require you to tell us a little more about how you do this in the text box section of the portal).

Helpful reminder

You may already be meeting this standard with your existing menu!



Hint

This standard only applies to lunchtime main meals, including jacket potatoes, main course salads and hot sandwiches (e.g., paninis, toasties). It does not apply to cold sandwiches or salad bars.

Don't forget

Our Certification Officers are always here to help!

Standard 1.4

All meat is from farms which satisfy UK animal welfare standards.

Why is it important?

Caterers using Farm Assured meat can claim with confidence that UK minimum standards on animal welfare are being met, and that meat can be traced back to the farm.

How do I meet this standard?

All meat and meat products on the menu need to be accredited by one of the following welfare schemes:

- Assured Food Standards (Red Tractor Assurance)
- British Deer Farms & Parks Association Farm Quality Assurance schemes
- Farm Assured Welsh Livestock (FAWL)
- Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) Northern Ireland
- Organic
- RSPCA Assured
- Quality Meat Scotland (QMS)

Upload a completed Meat List (you will find the blank Meat List on the resources tab on the portal).

Upload proof of purchase. This can be an invoice, delivery note, or an order sheet downloaded from a purchasing platform. We need this evidence for all meat products listed on your Meat List.

If your proof of purchase shows that the meat is farm assured, we will not ask for any more evidence.

If it doesn't, there are other ways you can show us the meat is farm assured:

- Product specification with details of the Farm Assurance scheme
- Take a photo of the packaging showing the Farm Assurance scheme
- Ask your supplier to complete a declaration stating all meat they are supplying to you is farm assured (you will find a blank supplier declaration on the resources tab of the portal)
- Your supplier contracts

Helpful reminder

Make sure all meat served on your menu is included on your Meat List.

Hint

If your suppliers can include the Farm Assurance scheme within the product name on the invoice, it will reduce the amount of evidence we need to see.

Standard 1.5

No fish are served that are rated 5 on the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) Good Fish Guide.

Why is it important?

More than a third of global fish stocks are overexploited, with severe consequences for biodiversity and the health and livelihoods of people around the world.

How do I meet this standard?

Upload one or more of the following documents to your caterer portal. This needs to relate to all the fish on your previously submitted menu cycle:

- Share your MCS (Marine Conservation Society) Seafood source list from the MCS Good Fish Guide for Business
- A contract with your supplier showing you only purchase fish rated 1-4 by MCS
- A completed Supplier Declaration (you will find a blank supplier declaration on the resources tab of the portal)
- Your fish purchasing policy showing you only purchase fish rated 1-4 by MCS
- Fish purchase invoices showing MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) or Organic status

If you cannot evidence this standard in one of the ways above, we will need to know details of the species, catch method, and catch area of the fish on your menu.

Helpful reminder

If you serve tuna as a jacket potato topping or sandwich filling, this counts as a fish item, and we'll need to see evidence for it.

Hint

Did you know, the MCS Good Fish Guide for Business is a free online tool which can help you source compliant fish. It makes it easy to see if you need to make any swaps, or if there are more sustainable options available.

FYI

MSC Certified and Organic Certified fish means you automatically comply with this standard.



Standard 1.6

All bird eggs (and egg products) are free range.

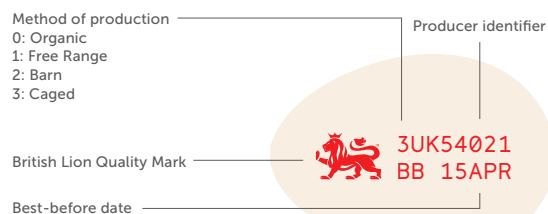
Why is it important?

Free range birds have access to the outdoors and are not confined in cages. This allows them to benefit from daylight and carry out natural behaviours such as walking, wing flapping, dust bathing, perching, and nesting.

How can I meet this standard?

By uploading one of the following pieces of evidence for each egg product on your menu to the portal:

- Egg purchase invoices showing production status (relating to the site that has been nominated for verification)
- Photo of your eggs/package to show they are free range (see below to check your egg labelling)
- A contract with your supplier
- A signed supplier declaration from your egg supplier stating that any eggs supplied are free range or organic (a blank supplier declaration is available to download from the resources tab of the portal)



Hint

The easiest way to meet this standard is usually to upload proof of purchase, as 'Free Range' or 'Org' (organic) will be in the product name on the invoice or delivery note.

Helpful reminder

Egg products from any bird include liquid egg, omelettes, egg sandwiches, Scotch eggs, gala pie.

FYI

If you use organic eggs, this can count towards points for silver and gold.



Standard 1.7

No undesirable additives, artificial sweeteners or trans fats are used.

Why is it important?

Additives, artificial sweeteners and trans fats can have negative impacts on human health. Until their safety for health and wellbeing has been scientifically proven, they are not permitted for use in Food for Life certified menus.

How can I meet this standard?

By uploading one of the following pieces of evidence to the portal:

- A completed copy of the Policy Template (you will find a template on the resources tab of the portal)
- Your existing purchasing policy
- A contract with your suppliers (of dried, ambient, and processed food)
- A signed supplier declaration (you will find a blank supplier declaration on the resources tab of the portal)

Once we've received the information above, we'll ask to see proof of ingredients for a few items on your menu.



Hint

You can use our Policy Template, and it covers you for Standard 1.7 and 1.8. This means you don't need to ask for supplier declarations and makes it easy for you to be compliant.



Standard 1.7 (continued)

Sweeteners

- E420 (i) Sorbitol
- E420 (ii) Sorbitol syrup
- E421 Mannitol
- E950 Acesulfame K
- E951 Aspartame
- E952 Cyclamic acid (+ Na and Ca salts)
- E954 Saccharin (+ Na, K, and Ca salts)
- E955 Sucralose
- E957 Thaumatin
- E960 Steviol glycoside
- E961 Neotame
- E962 Salt of aspartame-acesulfame
- E964 Polyglycolic acid
- E965 (i) Maltitol
- E965 (ii) Maltitol syrup
- E966 Lactitol
- E967 Xylitol
- E969 Advantame
- E959 Neohesperidine DC

Colourings

- E102 Tartrazine
- E104 Quinoline yellow
- E107 Yellow 2G
- E110 Sunset yellow
- E120 Cochineal
- Carminic acid
- Carmines
- E122 Carmoisine
- E123 Amarant
- E124 Ponceau 4R
- E129 Allura red
- E131 Patent blue V
- E132 Indigo carmine
- E133 Brilliant blue FCF
- E151 Black PN
- E171 Titanium dioxide

Flavourings/enhancers

- 1.0 E621 Monosodium glutamate
- 2.0 E635 Sodium 5 – ribonucleotide

Preservatives

- 3.0 E211 Sodium benzoate

Artificial trans fats



Standard 1.8

No genetically modified ingredients.

Why is it important?

The Soil Association, along with the worldwide organic movement, does not support genetic modification. There are several reasons behind this, including the potential risks posed to human health and the environment, and the social and economic impacts of the technology, particularly on smallholder farmers in developing countries.

How can I meet this standard?

There are two pieces of evidence we need to comply with this standard:

1. Please provide one of the following:
 - A completed copy of the Policy Template (you will find a blank supplier declaration on the resources tab on the portal)
 - Your existing purchasing policy
 - A contract with your suppliers (of dried, ambient, and processed food)
 - A signed supplier declaration (you will find a blank supplier declaration on the resources tab on the portal)
2. Please submit proof of ingredients (e.g., specifications/ingredient declarations) for all cooking oils you use. This evidence must demonstrate that the product does not contain GM.



Hint

GM products are legally required to be labelled, so you can easily check.

Helpful reminder

Cooking oils are often the only product we see containing GM ingredients in the UK - make sure you check all the oils you use!



Standard 1.9

Menus use UK seasonal produce.

Why is it important?

Eating in-season UK produce is one of the best ways to reduce your carbon footprint, eat food at its best, and it is often more affordable too.

Ask your supplier to advise you on what's currently in season and how they can support you.

How can I meet this standard?

By describing how you include and highlight UK seasonal ingredients in your menus.

We also need to see proof of purchase (invoice/delivery note/download from purchasing platform) to show purchasing of UK seasonal ingredients.



Hint

If your supplier can add the country of origin to the product line on the invoice or delivery note, it makes this standard much quicker to complete and less evidence is required.

Seasonal produce is fresh produce that can be produced outdoors in the UK at that time of year.

Helpful reminder

If menus are seasonal, it becomes easier to source fresh produce locally (which can score you points at silver and gold).



Standard 1.10

Information is on display about where your food is from.

Why is it important?

Letting your customers and staff know about the origins of the food offers them more of a connection between what they are eating, where it comes from and how it was produced.

It can also help them to feel proud of the food you source and the support you give local or British businesses.

How can I meet this standard?

Tell us how you communicate to diners about where your food comes from.

Upload to the portal one example of how you communicate to customers about food provenance. For example:

- Poster (we've provided a template you can use on the resources tab on the portal)
- A link to your website
- A photo of a display
- A map of your suppliers
- Newsletter
- Social media post



Hint

We've provided a Food for Life Served Here branded poster for you to use. Not only does it let customers know where your food is from, but also promotes the sustainability of your ingredients.

Be proud of serving British meat and tell your diners where the farm is located!

Helpful reminder

This standard aims to educate your diners on where your food is from. Tell them which part of the country the eggs are from, or where the fruit and veg is grown.



Standard 1.11

Standard 1.12

Food waste reduction strategies are in place.

Catering staff are supported with skills training in fresh food preparation and Food for Life Served Here.

Why is it important?

Reducing food waste is an urgent priority for climate change and food security. It can also help to reduce your ingredient spend and waste disposal costs.

How can I meet this standard?

By completing any of the actions below:

- Uploading a food waste minimisation plan or policy (you will find a blank template on the resources tab of the portal if you don't already have one).
- Green Kitchen Standard (GKS) certificate, or evidence of working towards achieving GKS.
- Cool Food Pro (CFP) - Carbon Calculator: if you are actively using CFP to record and reduce food waste.
- Zero Waste Scotland - evidence of using their resources to minimise your food waste.



Hint

Cool Food Pro has loads of great, kitchen friendly waste resources you can use for free!

Ask us about our Waste Reduction Workshop – for a tailor-made action plan and practical tips for your organisation.

Why is it important?

We want to encourage opportunities for catering teams to acquire relevant qualifications in support of their continuing professional development.

Training can also help with completing the standards to refresh existing cooking from scratch skills, and learn more about nutrition, and seasonal menu planning.

How can I meet this standard?

There are two things needed to be compliant with this standard.

1. Let us know how you provide practical training in fresh food preparation and seasonal menu planning as part of a programme of continuous professional development. Share an example of staff training record to demonstrate staff training in fresh food preparation methods.
2. Demonstrate how catering staff are briefed about Food for Life Served Here.



Hint

We have a free online briefing available. It contains everything you and your staff need to know about Food for Life Served Here and can be used to complete this standard.

We can also provide in-person training and consultancy, get in touch to find out more.

Get in touch

The Sustainable Catering team are here to support you. We are always happy to help with any queries you may have.

You can contact the team on **0117 314 5180**

If you are interested in learning more about us, email

sustainablecatering@foodforlife.org.uk

If you are already a certified Food for Life Served

Here caterer, email **catering@foodforlife.org.uk**

Find out more here:
foodforlife.org.uk

X f in

