



Setting up a café in your community garden

The purpose of this guidance is to help community gardens or farms establish a café that can generate an income to help support the rest of the site.

There may be additional reasons for setting up a café

- Training opportunity for volunteers
- Creating employment in the local area
- Creating a market for your produce
- Providing an opportunity to show how local, healthy food can be cooked and enjoyed
- Providing a community hub
- As a pilot project for a bigger venture such as event catering

How to use this guidance

While this guidance includes lots of information, factsheets, templates and useful links. Further and up-to-date information is available online and we'd always recommend speaking to other community gardens who have gone through a similar process. There may be a local café who is willing to support you as well.

This guidance is designed to be used once you have agreed to set up a café and what its purpose will be. This means you will already have done some market research, consulted with your members and checked that your governing document allows you to set up a trading café.

Getting started

In the early stages it's worth getting to know your Food Safety Officers (Environmental Health Officer (EHO) and Trading Standards) who can be contacted via your local council or identified on the [Food Standard's Agency website](#)

The Food Standards Agency's [Starting Up](#) guide is your next port of call. While this guidance is for *all* new catering businesses, it will help you make sure you've properly considered the undertaking and that you stay within the law. Charities and social enterprises are subject to the same legislation as private businesses with regards to food safety and hygiene.

In addition, the Food Standard's Agency has created a pack called "[Safer Food, Better Business. For Caterers](#)". It is very comprehensive and easy to follow, designed to be free of jargon.

Business planning

We recommend putting together a complete business plan for your café that can sit within your organisation's business plan. Making a business plan helps you:

- check that your venture is viable
- make sure it stays on track
- ensure that everyone shares the vision of the café.

It doesn't have to be a lengthy document and it's good to make it as accessible as possible.

Financial management

As with any enterprising undertaking it's important to make sure you know the full cost of your activities and your likely incomings and outgoings. New business rarely makes a profit from the outset so ensure you have the capital to support the enterprise and carry out financial forecasting to estimate when you can expect to break even and generate an income.

Click on the links below for examples templates that can be used in your café:

- [Cash flow and budget example](#)
- [Recipe cost calculator](#)
- [Daily cash sheet](#) (paper and electronic templates with example)
- [Weekly café sales records](#) (template with example)

Keep an eye on our website for upcoming training in finance for community growers or think about asking a local accountancy firm for support with developing your financial data management systems.

Your organisation may have established financial management systems that you can replicate for this enterprise. It is also important to keep a record of your assets and their depreciation.

You will need to ensure that you have adequate insurance for the equipment you purchase and the activities to be carried out.

Health and safety

Selling food and drink to the public means you need to abide by food standards regulations. Your EHO will be able to help you meet these. It is important that all staff and volunteers understand and adhere to food safety and hygiene regulations. Free or low-cost food hygiene courses are often available for people on low wages or volunteers.

Some of the products and processes you use in the café will be hazardous which means you will need to do a COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) assessment. There is more information about this available at www.hse.gov.uk.

HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) is a system that helps food business operators look at how they handle food and introduces procedures to make sure the food produced is safe to

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eat. As a food business you must have a hazard analysis plan (HACCP) to meet food safety and hygiene standards and keep adequate records.

As with all activities you carry out at your site, you will need to risk assess the activities involved in running your café – remembering to assess the risk to staff, volunteers, visitors and customers. Assessments should be reviewed regularly and whenever a change happens.

The best way to maintain good health and safety is to ensure all volunteers and staff are properly inducted and procedures are clear, adequate and always followed.

Use the links below to find examples of:

- [Food Safety Posters for Display](#) (including allergy information)
- [Hot food temperature log](#)
- [COSHH Assessment](#) (template and examples)
- [HACCP Assessment](#) (guidance and templates)
- [Risk assessment template](#)

Marketing

As part of your business planning you should consider how you will bring in customers to support your new venture.

As well as word of mouth, posters and social media, you could consider events for specific audiences, special offers (lunchtime soup and bread deal) or a loyalty card scheme.

[Find a simple example marketing plan here.](#)

Day to Day Management

Most community garden café's work best with a paid coordinator and a team of well-trained volunteers. This is likely a similar situation to the rest of the site and therefore you will have existing organisational procedures for staff and volunteer recruitment, induction and management that should be followed.

Day to day tasks will vary according to your site but the templates accessed below can be used as a starting point or framework for creating your own task lists. Checklists are extra important when dealing with food as they help to monitor and prove that all procedures have been followed. Many community garden cafes will use different volunteers each day (and a part time coordinator) so these lists help to maintain consistency.

- [Café cleaning schedule](#)
- [Café Procedures Manual](#)
- [Opening and closing schedule](#)

It's also worth having a handover book so that the next day's team can be notified of any issues. This may be concerning customers, food, equipment or deliveries.

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Supply chain

You may be able to stock much of your café with homegrown/homemade produce but most likely you will need to supplement this by buying in stock. When deciding who to purchase from, remember your ethos for the café – do you want to be cheap, organic, local, vegetarian, halal, etc?

As you become more established, you may be able to negotiate better rates on products. Remember to let your suppliers know you are an enterprise that is benefiting the community and see if they'll give you a discount!

Social Farms & Gardens has teamed up with Nisbets, the UK's leading catering supplier, to offer a discount on products to members, [view more online](#).

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