

Frozen acai: Guidance for food businesses

Frozen acai has been linked to cases of foodborne illness in NSW. It is a ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food that must be kept cold to remain safe to eat.

What is acai?

Acai is the fruit from the Açazeiros palm, native to the Amazon region in South America. Frozen acai has gained popularity as a snack food in recent years and is sold through cafés and specialty acai outlets. It is served in a cone or bowl, like a soft serve, with toppings and sauces.

85% of the world's Acai comes from northern Brazil, where it is pulped and made into a frozen fruit mix, similar to a sorbet. It comes in 2 formats – powdered, which can be reconstituted before being frozen into a soft serve, or frozen bulk tubs, where the product can be scooped or thawed and added to a soft serve machine.

How to reduce the food safety risk

Temperature control

A common cause of foodborne illness is storing and displaying potentially hazardous foods at incorrect temperatures for long periods. This can lead to the rapid and sustained growth of food poisoning bacteria, some of which can produce toxins. These bacteria grow best between 5°C and 60°C.

Retailers must store and display frozen acai at a temperature of 5°C or below – even during thawing. The business must also ensure there is sufficient freezer, cool room and/or refrigerator space to store frozen, chilled and thawed food products at all times. If frozen acai has been left out of temperature control for more than 4 hours it must be thrown out, in accordance with the 2-hour/4-hour rule.

The 2-hour/4-hour rule

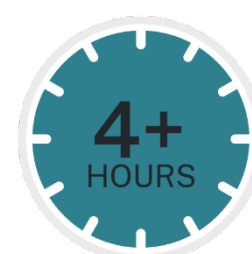
The time food can be safely held between 5°C and 60°C (outside of temperature control) is commonly referred to as the '2-hour/4-hour rule'. If food has been left out of temperature control for:



It is okay to **use** or **refrigerate** for later use.



It is okay to **use now** (can't be put back into cold storage).



Do not use. Must be thrown out.

For more information, see [2-hour/4-hour rule for businesses](#) (PDF, 260 KB).

Cleaning and sanitising

All food contact equipment and tools, such as benches, knives, chopping boards, blenders, scoops and spatulas, specialist equipment like soft serve machines, and eating and drinking utensils, such as bowls, spoons and cups, must be kept in a clean *and* sanitary condition.

In the food industry, cleaning and sanitising is a 2-step process. A surface needs to be thoroughly cleaned before it is sanitised.

- **Step 1: Cleaning** uses warm to hot water, detergent and physical action to remove visible food, grease and dirt.
- **Step 2: Sanitising** is the process of applying heat (usually very hot water), chemicals or both, to an already clean surface to reduce the number of bacteria and other organisms to a safe level.

Effective cleaning removes most, but not all, bacteria. The job of the sanitiser is to kill any remaining bacteria.

For more information, see:

- [Cleaning and sanitising in retail food businesses](#) (PDF, 339 KB)
- [Chemical sanitisers – advice for food businesses](#) (PDF, 231 KB)

Food handler skills and knowledge

All food handlers at the business must be trained in, and be able to demonstrate, appropriate skills and knowledge in food safety, including temperature control, cleaning and sanitising, as well as personal hygiene.

Food handlers must also take all reasonable measures not to handle food or food surfaces in a way that is likely to compromise the safety and suitability of food. This includes:

- not handling food when they are ill
- taking all practicable measures to prevent unnecessary contact with ready-to-eat food
- washing their hands with hot, soapy water, and drying them thoroughly with single-use paper towels:
 - whenever they are likely to be a source of contamination, for example after using the toilet, smoking, coughing, sneezing, blowing their nose, eating, drinking or touching the hair, scalp or body
 - before handling ready-to-eat food and after handling raw food.

See [Health and hygiene requirements of food handlers](#) (PDF, 157 KB) for the full requirements.

The NSW Food Authority's free online [Food Handler Basics training course](#) is available in 3 languages to help retailers meet their food handler training obligations.

More information

- Visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- Email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au
- Phone the Food Authority helpline on 1300 552 406