



Environmental Agency

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Guidance for Catering Establishments: Safe Handling of Wild-Caught Fish and Fishery Products

Food business operators in Gibraltar must ensure that all food placed on the market is safe, fit for human consumption and handled in accordance with food safety legislation. This includes specific responsibilities when preparing, storing, or serving wild-caught saltwater and freshwater fish, which may contain parasites or present a histamine (Scombrototoxin) risk.

This guidance sets out the requirements and good practices that all food business operators must follow when preparing, storing, or serving these products.

Parasite Risks in Wild-Caught Fish

All wild-caught fish may contain parasites such as *Anisakis simplex*. These parasites can cause gastrointestinal illness or allergic reactions when fish is eaten raw or undercooked. Food business operators must ensure that fish intended to be eaten raw or lightly processed is frozen before use to eliminate parasites.

Products requiring freezing before consumption

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Sushi
- Sashimi
- Cold-smoked fish where the smoking process does not reach a core temperature of 60°C for at least one minute
- Gravlax
- Carpaccio
- Pickled, marinated or salted fishery products where processing does not kill parasites

Freezing requirements

To ensure parasite destruction, all parts of the product must be frozen to:

- -20°C for at least 24 hours, or
- -35°C for at least 15 hours

These time-temperature combinations are internationally recognised for parasite control.

Histamine (Scombrototoxin) Food Poisoning

Fish belonging to the Scombridae family (including tuna) can develop high levels of histamine if not handled correctly. Histamine formation begins immediately after the fish dies and is accelerated by inadequate temperature control.

Food business operators must ensure:

- Immediate chilling of fish to below 4°C after catch
- Strict temperature control during storage and preparation
- Rejection of fish suspected of temperature abuse

Histamine cannot be detected by taste or smell and cooking does not destroy it. Only good handling practices prevent histamine formation. Poor handling can result in rapid-onset illness shortly after consumption.

Visual Inspection Requirements

Food business operators must visually inspect all fish and fishery products before preparation or sale. Any fish containing visible parasites must be rejected or trimmed to remove affected portions.

This forms part of the operator's legal duty to prevent unsafe food from being supplied.

Bluefin Tuna and Legal Compliance

During the open season for Bluefin tuna, any tuna offered for sale that is suspected to be illegally caught will be reported to the Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage.

Staff Training and Good Practice

Food businesses must ensure that staff receive training appropriate to their duties. This includes:

- Parasite-control awareness
- Safe fish-handling practices
- Temperature-control procedures
- Recognition of contamination risks

Training should be refreshed regularly and documented.

Further Advice

For clarification or support contact the Environmental Agency:

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