

# Hōtoke Winter 2026

## Food business tips and reminders

Winter is here, and Matariki is on the horizon, making it the perfect opportunity for restaurants and cafes to serve up tasty comfort food and warm hospitality. From hearty seasonal dishes and rich desserts to cosy interiors and hot beverages, winter brings its own special flavours. Check out our tips and tricks to serve up a perfect season.



### Knowledge is power Coping with an outage

Storms and power outages are regularly served up during New Zealand's winter months and can have an impact on refrigeration, cooking, and cleaning.

If power is lost, high-risk foods can become unsafe if they are not kept cold enough, and poor hygiene or undercooking can increase the risk of foodborne illness.

#### During an outage

- Keep fridge and freezer doors closed as much as possible
- Check food temperatures regularly
- Throw out any perishable food that has been above 5°C for more than four hours
- Do not refreeze thawed foods
- Follow your Food Control Plan (FCP) procedures
- Ensure plenty of safe water is available for cleaning and handwashing.

### Dishing up some training

### Winter warmers ... Putting safety first

Soups and stews are in demand during winter, so food needs to be cooled, stored and reheated correctly.

Remember when rapidly cooling cooked foods, to keep them at 5°C or below, label and date prepared food, and reheat meals to at least 75°C before serving. These measures can prevent harmful bacteria such as *Clostridium perfringens* and *Listeria monocytogenes* from growing.

#### Cool tips

Store ready-to-eat food, such as cooked meats, dairy, salads, and leftovers, on the fridge's top shelves, with packaged foods in the middle, and raw meat, poultry, and seafood on the bottom shelves in sealed containers. Fruit and veges belong in the crisper drawers, while condiments and drinks are best stored in the fridge door.

Avoid overloading shelves and remember to keep fridges at 5°C or below.

Interested in increasing your food safety knowledge? MPI now has its first online training module live on its website.

Check it out [here](#).

There are another five modules in the works with MPI aiming to release a new module every two to three months.

### What a pest

The temperatures might be cooler, but pests are still around and can contaminate food, packaging and surfaces. Any signs of pests should be dealt with quickly, and if they can't be managed effectively, contact a professional. Document pest control measures and ensure staff know how to spot and manage pests.



### Save the dates MPI's Food Business Levy

The **Food Business Levy** came into effect on **1 July 2025** and is charged per place if operating under a Food Control Plan (FCP) or per registered business if operating under a National Programme.

The levy is being phased in over three years.

- from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 – \$57.50 (plus GST)
- from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027– \$86.25 (plus GST)
- from 1 July 2027 – \$115 (plus GST) per year.

Regulations also allow for councils to recover administration costs in collecting the levy, which will be \$11 (plus GST) per invoice issued.

**All businesses registered with Far North District Council have been invoiced and reminder emails have been sent.**

If you have not received your invoice or the reminder email, please contact our compliance administrator at [Compliance.Admin@fndc.govt.nz](mailto:Compliance.Admin@fndc.govt.nz)

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### All about allergies

Food allergens are a serious food safety risk, so all staff should be up to speed on what's being served.

If food is advertised as gluten-free or dairy-free, then all allergens should be properly managed from prep through to service.

- Kitchen staff should know what ingredients are in each meal
- Check product labels regularly in case ingredients change



- Ensure front-of-house staff can confidently answer allergen questions
- For more information on allergen safety, head to [MPI](#).



### Here's what not to do

Food safety issues in busy kitchens often come down to small shortcuts becoming everyday habits. During busy service periods, it is easy for important food safety practices to slip, but these are often the exact issues identified during audits or following a complaint or foodborne illness incident.

#### Common mistakes to watch out for

- **Overloaded fridges:** Overpacked fridges restrict airflow, making it difficult to keep food at 5°C or below and increasing the risk of cross-contamination
- **Unlabelled or undated food:** Without clear labelling and date marking, staff may unknowingly use unsafe or expired food
- **Incorrect sanitiser use:** Sanitiser that is too weak may not kill bacteria, while overly strong solutions can create chemical risks
- **Inaccurate temperature records:** Temperature logs should reflect actual checks, as they are important evidence that food is being stored safely
- **Poor handwashing practices:** Gloves do not replace handwashing, and poor hygiene can quickly spread contamination during busy service
- **Cluttered cool rooms and storage areas:** Chemicals, personal items, and food should always be stored separately to prevent contamination risks.

Strong food safety practices help protect your customers, your reputation, and your business, while also meeting the requirements of your Food Control Plan and verification checks.



### Featured business

Black Cat Cafe  
60 Kerikeri Road, Kerikeri

### Hours

Mon-Thurs: 7.30am-6.30pm  
Fri & Sat: 7.30am-4pm  
Sun: Closed

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