

Use of boiled rainwater in food premises

All water that is used for human consumption including the preparation of food must be drinking water quality. Bringing water to a boil disinfects rainwater and can be an appropriate method of ensuring microbiological safety where only small amounts of rainwater are being used to prepare or produce food

Safe Drinking Water Act

The Safe Drinking Water Act applies to all food premises that supply rainwater as drinking water to members of the public. The Act defines drinking water as water that is intended for human consumption or is used for purposes connected with human consumption (such as the washing, preparation or cooking of food)..

Rainwater as drinking water

Rainwater is generally safe for most people to drink however sometimes it may be microbiologically compromised and have a lower microbial quality than mains water. This is particularly common after rainfall where *E.coli* levels are sometimes elevated.

Exemption for regulated food premises using boiled rainwater

An exemption from the requirements of the Act applies to small, regulated food premises such as roadhouses and cafes that use very low volumes of boiled rainwater for making tea and coffee and for a limited amount of food preparation. The exemption does not apply to the use of rainwater at regulated care or education premises.

Boiling procedure

Boiling rainwater for food preparation should only be undertaken where manageable and where only small volumes of rainwater are required on a daily basis.

Boiling is an effective method of disinfection against harmful microorganisms. Boiling does not have to be maintained for any length of time – kettles with automatic shut-offs are suitable for this purpose. The water can then be cooled and stored in a labelled, clean container until use. Water should be allowed to cool without the use of ice.

For the preparation of tea and coffee it is not necessary to pre-boil water. Un-boiled rainwater may be used for this application

Use of large volumes of rainwater

For food premises using larger volumes of rainwater e.g. greater than 20 L per day, boiling will not be practical. Food premises in this category are subject to the requirements of the Act. This includes registering with the Department for Health and Ageing as a drinking water provider and completing and implementing a risk management plan. More information can be found in the fact sheet '[Application of the Safe Drinking Water Act to food premises](#)'.



For more information

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