



**MID SUSSEX  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Oaklands Road  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH16 1SS

Switchboard: 01444 458166  
Fax: 01444 450027  
DX 300320 Haywards Heath 1  
www.midsussex.gov.uk

**Contact:** Martin Faulconbridge  
**E-mail:** Martin.Faulconbridge@midsussex.gov.uk  
**Direct line:** 01444 477478  
**Out of hours:** 07702 034236

**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** PR1891/KB/MF  
**Date:** 10 November 2014

## PRESS RELEASE

# Food Standards Agency urges you to ‘look before you book’ for Christmas

**Mid Sussex District Council is encouraging local people to take account of food hygiene ratings before booking their annual Christmas meal.**

Now is the time when many people will be planning a special Christmas meal with work colleagues, friends or family and Mid Sussex District Council is supporting the Food Standards Agency campaign that is asking people to ‘look before you book’.

Christmas is a time to enjoy good company and good food without worrying about food poisoning. However, customers can’t tell a restaurant’s hygiene standards by how clean and tidy the staff look or by how busy it is.

Hidden factors – like germs spread by bad hygiene practices – are the most important things to consider. Fortunately, these are checked by regular Environmental Health inspections and are reflected in a food hygiene rating.

The food hygiene rating tells people about hygiene standards in restaurants and other food businesses. It’s really easy to check. Just go online and check the Food Standards Agency website: [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings) or check for the green and black sticker on the premises. If a sticker is not displayed, just ask a member of staff about their rating.

The ratings are determined by local authority food safety officers and run from 0-5, with a 5 rating meaning a very good level of food hygiene. In general, 93% of food businesses are rated 3 or better, so there are plenty of places with good standards and it’s easy to avoid eating somewhere that does not make the grade.

**Corporate Communications**  
Diane Talbot  
Martin Faulconbridge  
Julie Blackstock



**Chief Executive**  
Kathryn Hall



Catherine Brown, Chief Executive, Food Standards Agency, agrees:

“This Christmas, do this one little thing for peace of mind when eating out. Take a moment to check the food hygiene rating, pick the right place, and enjoy a great meal out.”

Councillor Christopher Snowling, Mid Sussex District Council Cabinet Member for Health and Community adds:

“It’s easy for people in Mid Sussex to check hygiene ratings online and choose a restaurant for their Christmas parties that takes food hygiene seriously. This is an important time for local businesses. A good food hygiene rating is something to be proud of. It matters to customers so we are encouraging all businesses in Mid Sussex to display their rating and have a prosperous Christmas season.”

For more information, visit [www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/hygieneratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/hygieneratings).

**ENDS**

---

For more information please contact **Martin Faulconbridge on 01444 477478** or [Martin.Faulconbridge@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Martin.Faulconbridge@midsussex.gov.uk)

#### **Notes to Editors**

The Food Hygiene Ratings can be found at:

[www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings)

Frequently asked questions and answers can be found at

[www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/hygiene-rating-schemes/rating-schemes-faqs-en](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/hygiene-rating-schemes/rating-schemes-faqs-en)

- Mid Sussex District Council and the FSA want to:
  - o give consumers information about hygiene standards in food outlets so that they can make informed choices
  - o drive up hygiene standards in food businesses
  - o reduce the incidence of foodborne illness (recent research estimated that there were 500,000 cases from the main causes of foodborne illness. Including all types of food borne disease could double this figure to nearer 1 million cases).
  
- The scheme covers businesses supplying or serving food direct to consumers such as restaurants, takeaways, cafés, pubs, hotels, schools, hospitals, care homes, supermarkets and other retailers.
- There are six hygiene ratings ranging from ‘0’ (urgent improvement required) at the bottom to ‘5’ (very good) at the top.

- The scheme is designed so that all businesses, no matter how small can achieve the top rating by meeting (not exceeding) the legal requirements and any improvements needed to get a higher rating are no more than is required by law.

