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Defending himself in court, Croucher, 40, said: “I hate to say it, I really hate to say it, but I think I was rushed. I was rushing.” He said he had worked in kitchens for 20 years and was now “a better chef” because of the “horrible, horrible circumstance”.

He added: “Remorse is an understatement. This is something I will never forget. Because of it, I am a better chef and it is just a shame the cost of it had to be what it was.”

The judge, Sarah Campbell, said: “On 8 October 2018, 35 villagers went to the Crewe Arms for a harvest meal. Thirty-two people ate the shepherd’s pie. A healthy and well person died of a gastrointestinal haemorrhage induced from vomiting. No sentence I pass can reflect the loss caused to the family.

“Croucher was the chef that night. The mince was not cooked properly and was placed into a pan with iced water. Croucher needed to leave, so put the mince in cling film and put it in the fridge overnight. Having left it, he cooked it again and added warm mashed potato. He did not take the temperature when it was served.”

The court was told that members of the Holy Trinity church congregation did not want retribution against the pub, its landlord, Neil Billingham, or Croucher, who no longer works there.

But the judge raised concerns about the pub’s record, saying: “The Crewe Arms is an important pub to the local community. I have read many references from members of the community. They have all said that this was a one-off mistake but looking at the evidence this was not a one-off mistake.

“The pub should have been taking steps to be improving. Inspections in 2015 gave it three stars and in 2017 gave it only a one star.”

Defending Billingham and his company, the Bobcat Pub Co, Christopher Hopkins told the judge: “You will see that Billingham went to local residents who were affected shortly after, apologising for the incident. He also asks me to express his condolences to the Neuman family on his behalf.”

Billingham, of Northampton, who admitted three charges of contravening food regulations was fined £9,000 and ordered to pay £1,000 court costs. His company was fined almost £3,000.

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