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Selling Food for Fun and Profit: Doing it Safely

Michigan State University Extension Service

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Selling Food for Fun and Profit: *Doing it Safely*

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Many non-profit groups prepare food for fun and profit. Each time safe handling practices are not applied at these events, the risk for food-borne illness increases. Almost all food-borne illnesses could be prevented by following safe food-handling practices.

In some jurisdictions, non-profit organizations serving food to the public need a license to sell food. Licensing would mean that the operation must comply with the state food service sanitation code.

Who needs a license?

If your group sells food to the public at a site for a short period of time (in Michigan it is 14 consecutive days), you might need a license. The license is called a temporary food service license. A temporary food service is often set up in conjunction with:

- Carnivals
- Animal shows
- Festivals
- Fairs
- Craft shows
- Public rallies

To determine if you need a license, telephone your local health department. (Many health departments require you to contact them at least

one week before the event.) Most health departments charge a fee for the license. Fees will vary.

During the event, be prepared for an inspection by a health department representative. Follow the rules in your state's food service sanitation code.

Who does not need a license?

A person or group preparing food for a private event, such as a wedding reception, family reunion, graduation party or church picnic (even if the event is in a public place such as a reception hall or club), does not need a temporary food service license. However, if food for events such as these is prepared by a caterer, the caterer should have a food service establishment license. This license is different from a temporary food service license. It is issued annually by the local health department.

A general rule is that you need a temporary food service license only if the food is to be sold to the public.

Regardless of whether you need a license, always handle food safely.



Food-borne illness

Food-borne illness affects an estimated 24 million to 81 million Americans each year. Food-borne illness occurs when food is contaminated with bacteria and the bacteria grow to large numbers. This occurs when food is kept at unsafe temperatures — between 40 degrees F and 140 degrees F. Food-borne illness is nearly 100 percent preventable if safe food-handling practices are followed.

Safe food-handling practices include:

- Preparing food on site, the day of the event, OR one day prior to the event in a licensed kitchen and then properly refrigerating it. Never make food at home.
- Preparing food on clean and sanitized surfaces with clean and sanitized utensils.
- Keeping hot food at 140 degrees F or hotter and cold food at 40 degrees F or colder until it is served.
- Washing hands frequently for at least 20 seconds while preparing and serving food.
- Preventing contact between raw and cooked foods. Juices from raw foods could contaminate cooked foods.
- Using only food that comes from an approved source such as a grocery store or a restaurant supply store. Never serve home-canned foods.
- Thawing food in the refrigerator or in a microwave oven — never at room temperature.
- Never leaving food out of the refrigerator for longer than two hours. If outside temperatures are 80 degrees or hotter, food can be left out of the refrigerator for up to one hour — no longer.

What you need to handle food safely

Healthy food handlers who are:

- Wearing gloves to handle foods that will not be cooked.
- Wearing clean clothing.
- Wearing hair pulled back.

Ways to keep food cold:

- A refrigerator or refrigerated truck that will keep air temperatures at 40 degrees F or colder.

OR

Ice. Ice can be used if:

- ✓ All food immersed in the ice is stored in sealed, watertight containers.
- ✓ You have enough commercially prepared ice to last all day. *Never bring ice from home. Ice from home might be contaminated.*
- ✓ You have a way to continuously drain melted ice (i.e., drain spigot of the cooler left open).
- ✓ You have a bucket to catch the melt water — melt water is considered insanitary and must be disposed of properly.

Ways to keep food hot:

- Camping stove.
- Propane gas grill.
- Sterno with a windbreak. A windbreak can be made by wrapping aluminum foil completely around the base of the Sterno.
- Charcoal grill.

Keep hot food at 140 degrees F or hotter and cold food at 40 degrees F or colder.

A plan for emergencies.

If you lose electricity, have back-up measures readily available. You must maintain safe food temperatures at all times.

Plenty of extra utensils, dishware and cooking equipment.

Store dirty utensils, dishware and cooking equipment in a large covered container. Dirty items will attract flies and other insects. It is preferable to wash and sanitize these items at another location where a three-compartment sink or dishwasher is available.



Sanitizing solution for dishes and utensils:

Mix 1/2 tablespoon of household bleach for every gallon of warm (not hot) water that is in the third compartment of your sink.

To wash and sanitize utensils or dishes in a three-compartment sink:

- Wash with warm, soapy water in compartment one.
- Rinse all soap off in compartment two.
- Immerse items completely in a sanitizing solution for at least one minute in compartment three.
- Air dry on a clean drying rack. Do not dry with a towel.

Washing utensils and dishes in a dishwasher is also an acceptable way to sanitize. If you would like to wash and sanitize dishes at the event, you can mimic a three-compartment sink by using three large tubs. Follow the washing and sanitizing procedures listed above.

Sanitizing solution for food preparation surfaces:

Mix 1 tablespoon of household bleach with 1 gallon of warm (not hot) water. Store the mixture in a spray bottle.

The mixture can be used for up to one week. When sanitizing surfaces, clean a surface with warm, soapy water, spray the surface with sanitizing solution, spread the solution over the surface with a clean paper towel and air dry. Do not rinse off the sanitizing solution. Do not use this method to sanitize dishes, utensils, or pots and pans.

An approved water source:

Do not use home garden hoses — they cannot be properly sanitized. Use only food-grade hoses. These hoses are usually white and are available at most hardware stores. Chlorinate hoses before use. Do so by filling with water a tub that is large enough to hold the hose. Usually a tub holding 20 or more gallons of water is needed. Mix in 1 to 2 cups of bleach. Immerse the hose in the tub for at least one minute. After removing, run water through the hose for at least five minutes.

A proper handwashing setup:

- Container with a spigot on the bottom, i.e., an unplugged coffee urn or a large insulated drink container to hold water.
- Hand soap (preferably liquid soap because it is less messy) and paper towels.
- A container to catch wastewater.

Proper garbage removal:

- Several plastic or metal trash cans with plastic liners and lids to prevent garbage overflow.
- Access to a dumpster to empty cans frequently.

Tables or shelving to keep food and supplies at least 6 inches off the ground to prevent contamination from dirt, water and insects that might be on the ground.

Ways to protect food and supplies from contamination by coughs, sneezes, dust, and flies and other insects. Cover with plastic wrap, aluminum foil or lids, or keep food and supplies in their original packaging.

Use this checklist to determine if you have everything you need to operate a safe and clean temporary food service operation.

For sanitizing surfaces, you need:

- ✓ A bucket of soapy water.
- ✓ A bucket of clean water.
- ✓ A spray bottle with a mixture of bleach and water.
- ✓ Paper towels.

For handwashing, you need:

- ✓ Hand soap (preferably liquid).
 - ✓ Paper towels.
 - ✓ A handwashing sink.
- OR
- ✓ A large container with a spigot filled with warm water and a container to catch wastewater.

Cups, dishes and napkins are:

- ✓ Stored in containers.
- ✓ Covered and at least 6 inches off the ground.

Food and supplies are:

- ✓ Prepared on site or in a licensed kitchen.

(If you are required to have a temporary food service license, your local health department must be notified of where and when food will be prepared if made off site.)

- ✓ Covered with plastic wrap or foil, or stored in lidded containers.
- ✓ Stored off the ground.

Trash containers are:

- ✓ Plastic or metal containers with bag liners and covers.
- ✓ Emptied frequently.

If you need a temporary food service license:

- ✓ Post it.
- ✓ Serve only the foods listed on the license.

For temperature control, you need:

- ✓ A food thermometer with a temperature range of 0 to 220 degrees F.

Equipment to keep food cold:

- ✓ An ice chest with a drain and lots of commercially prepared ice.

OR

- ✓ A refrigerator.

Equipment to keep food hot:

- ✓ Camping stove.
- ✓ Propane gas grill.
- ✓ Sterno with windbreak.
- ✓ Charcoal grill.

Food handlers should be:

- ✓ Healthy and free of cuts/sores on hands.
- ✓ Wearing clean plastic gloves to handle food that will not be cooked.
- ✓ Wearing clean clothing.
- ✓ Wearing hair pulled back.
- ✓ Not smoking while handling food.
- ✓ Washing hands frequently for at least 20 seconds after:
 - Using the bathroom.
 - After handling raw foods such as meat, fish and poultry.
 - After picking up items off the ground.



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