

Food Cart

PLAN REVIEW, LICENSING AND SAFE OPERATION

Definition

A food cart is a food and beverage service establishment that is a nonmotorized vehicle self-propelled by the operator. A food cart must be a single self-contained unit.

How to get started

Food and beverage establishments in Minnesota are licensed by different agencies. The establishment's menu and location of operation determines which agency is responsible for plan review and licensing. To find out which agency is responsible, see the [Licensing](#) website. Contact the appropriate agency to discuss your business plan, plan review and licensing requirements, and obtain applications.

Support facilities

A servicing area is a base location used for operational activities that are not available on the food cart. These activities include:

- Vehicle and equipment cleaning
- Emptying liquid or solid wastes
- Refilling water tanks or ice bins
- Loading food

A food cart that does not have an approved 3-compartment sink installed on the cart must have a separate licensed facility, or an agreement with a licensed facility for warewashing. If no multiuse utensils or equipment are used, warewashing requirements do not apply.

Obtaining food, beverages and ice from approved sources is the first step in ensuring safe food for your customers. The following activities may be done at a separate licensed facility:

- Food preparation such as washing or cutting produce, cooking and cooling.
- Storage of food, utensils and single service items. Food cannot be prepared or stored in a home.
- Supply water to the cart. Water must be from an approved source. Some approved sources are a public water supply system or commercially bottled drinking water.

Safe operation

Employee health and hygiene

Employees who have been ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea cannot work in a food establishment for at least 24 hours after their symptoms end.

Handwashing

Handwashing is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses, which can cause foodborne illness.

- Ensure your handwashing sink is set up before you begin food preparation. Make it easily accessible to all employees and use it only for handwashing.
- Handwashing sinks need running water, soap, disposable towels and a trash container.

Hennepin County Environmental Health

479 Prairie Center Drive Eden Prairie, MN 55344

612-543-5200 | www.hennepin.us/envhealth

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When to wash:

- Before working with food, utensils, or equipment.
- Before putting on gloves.
- As often as needed during food preparation and when changing tasks.
- After touching soiled surfaces and body parts and whenever hands become contaminated.
- After using the bathroom.

Preventing bare hand contact

Prevent bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food by wearing disposable gloves or using utensils, deli tissue, spatulas, tongs or other dispensing equipment.

Clean and separate

Contaminated equipment is one common cause of foodborne illness. For food-contact surfaces follow three steps for [Cleaning and Sanitizing \(PDF\)](#).

1. **Wash** in hot, soapy water.
2. **Rinse** in clean water.
3. **Sanitize** in chemicals.

Use approved chemical sanitizers such as chlorine bleach, quaternary ammonium or iodine. Always follow label instructions. Use the required sanitizer solution strength and contact time. Use a test kit to verify the sanitizer concentration.

Prevent cross-contamination of ready-to-eat food from raw animal food or dirty equipment.

- Store raw meat, poultry and fish below ready-to-eat food.
- Store and handle ice safely. Ice used to cool beverage containers must be drained. Do not re-use this ice in drinks or food preparation.
- Store damp or soiled wiping cloths in an approved sanitizer at the required strength.

Cold and hot holding

Improper holding temperatures and times are one common cause of foodborne illness.

- Maintain cold time/temperature control for safety food (TCS) at 41°F or below. Frozen food must remain frozen.
- Maintain hot TCS food at 135°F or above.

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