



# Island County Food Vendor Guidelines

Your questions concerning food sale answered

Supporting local growers and vendors is an essential part of Island County life. The various markets and events offer year-round opportunities for food vendors to sell products. Farmer's markets and community farms with fresh vegetables and fruits are an important part of our community fabric. Island County works closely with organizers to screen all food vendors to determine if a permit is required or if an exemption may exist that allows operations. Below, you will find answers to your questions concerning selling food at a temporary food establishment (fair, festival, or an organized recurring event such as a Farmer's Market). If you cannot find the answer to your question below, please email Island County Public Health directly at [foodsafety@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:foodsafety@islandcountywa.gov).



## I want to have food vendors at my event, how can I help my food vendors get set up with Island County Public Health?

The event coordinator of the event will need to first contact the Island County Planning Department to obtain the necessary permit. Once the event has been approved by Planning, please contact the Food Program to complete an event coordinator's application. When submitting the application, please provide a list of all food vendors you would like to operate at your event. The Food Program will ensure all vendors have the necessary permits to operate at the event.

**Who needs a food worker card?** The on-site person in charge of the food stand must have a valid Washington State Food Handler Card.

**How can I safely sample my food?** After verifying the need for a permit by contacting

the Island County Public Health team and acquiring a food worker card, ensure that a temporary hand wash station is in place. Adhere to strict hygiene rules, using clean, well-maintained cutting boards and utensils. Offer pre-portioned samples using food paper, napkins, toothpicks, or cups and provide a waste bin for disposal. Avoid offering samples in communal bags or bowls to prevent bare-hand contact from customers. Display only enough samples for 30 minutes and discard any unused samples thereafter.

**Can I use Sterno to keep hot foods in an outdoor setting?** No, this is not an approved method of hot holding at outdoor events. Instead, use a steam table, barbecue, or grill.

**What type of thermometer is required?** A thin, metal-stem, digital thermometer is required for most food establishments.

**Can I offer samples at my booth if the food I am selling is exempt from permit?** Yes, sampling foods from the exempt list is allowed. No permit will be required to sample these foods since the food is exempt from licensure.

**Is it ever OK to leave hot or cold food out at room temperature?** No, all cold food must be kept 41F or below and all hot food must be 135F or above. Leaving food at room temperature is not permitted due to the risk of foodborne illness.

**How do I know if the food I prepare requires a permit?** All foods served to the public require notification to the Health Department, and usually a permit. Certain food service activities can be done without a permit however you must apply for a permit exemption. These activities include:

- Individual samples of non-TCS sliced

- fruits and vegetables (cut tomato and cut leafy greens would require a permit).
- Popcorn and flavoured popcorn that are not TCS Foods.
- Dried herbs and spices processed in an approved facility.
- Crushed ice drinks containing only ingredients that are not TCS foods and dispensed from a self-contained machine that makes its own ice (snow cones and shaved ice are not included).
- Corn on the cob.
- Whole roasted peppers.
- Roasted nuts, peanuts, and roasted candy-coated nuts.
- Chocolate-dipped ice cream bars prepared from pre-packaged ice cream bars produced in a food processing plant.
- Chocolate-dipped bananas prepared from bananas peeled and frozen in an approved facility.
- Cotton Candy.

Please contact Island County Public Health for a Permit Exemption application.

**Is selling/serving food at a public event considered catering?** No. Catering means a person who contracts with a client to prepare a specific menu and amount of food in an approved food establishment. If you are selling/serving food on-site to individual customers, a permit would be required.

**How much does a permit cost?** A temporary food vendor **license fee** is based on the type of food prepared on-site and the length of time that the special event is occurring. These fees range from **\$35.00** (sampling only permit) to **\$309** (high risk permit for **recurring event, one location**). Please contact Island County Public Health to determine which permit applies to your operation and the corresponding fee.

**How long does it take to process my permit?** Temporary food vendor applications must be received by Island County Public Health at least 14 calendar days before the event. Applications that

are received 14 to 3 days prior to the event are subject to a late fee in addition to the licence fee. Typically, we do not accept any temporary food vendor applications less than 48 hours before the event due to staffing and inspection requirements.

#### **Where do I find the forms to submit?**

Forms can be obtained at our offices or online. <https://islandcountywa.gov/187/Food-Safety-Program> QR Code on the back of the sheet to the main page?

**Are there foods that can be sold/served that do not require a permit?** Yes, there is a state-wide list of foods that are exempt from permit requirements. Notification is required and notification of an exempt food item does not require a fee.

**Do I need a permit if I want to sell something simple such as cupcakes, espresso, and/or hot dogs?** Yes, all foods served to the public require notification to the Health Department and usually a permit. Note that non-potentially hazardous baked goods are exempt from permits ONLY when served/sold by non-profit organizations.

**Do I need a business license in order to sell items at the farmer's market?** Yes, a state and local license are needed when selling taxable food items. In addition, each city requires permits. Contact the Washington Department of Licensing and the city where the food will be sold.

**Do I need a permit to sell uncut fruits and vegetables I grow?** No, a license from the Washington State Department of Agriculture is required to sell produce at a location other than where it was grown. A state business license and local business license may also be required.

**Can I sell or serve foods I make in my home?** Residential kitchens do not meet the requirements of the Washington State Retail Food Code. Use of a residential kitchen is only permissible when you've obtained approval from the Washington State Department of Agriculture through a Cottage

Food Permit or Food Processor License. Notification to the Health Department is required.

Nonprofits may make non-potentially hazardous baked goods in residential kitchens. Notification to the Health Department is required.

#### **What is a commissary kitchen?**

A commissary kitchen is a kitchen that meets facility and access requirements identified in WAC 246-215. Public kitchens that rent out their space can be used for a commissary kitchen. Some churches and grange halls hold public kitchen permits. Some permitted food establishments are willing to rent space. The complexity of foods prepared in a commissary kitchen must not exceed the permit complexity level of the commissary kitchen. For example, you cannot prepare raw chicken in a facility that is not permitted to process raw animal proteins.

**How do I know if a commissary kitchen I want to use meets all requirements?** If you have questions about whether or not a kitchen meets the requirements, contact Island County Public Health directly.

**Can I use produce purchased at a local market as an ingredient for food items I prepare and serve at the market?** Yes, as long as there is a designated food preparation sink on-site to properly rinse the produce before use.

**Can I sell raw-milk from my farm at the farmer's market?** It is legal to sell raw-milk in Island County. A permit with Island County Public Health is required. It is also required to post signage stating: "WARNING: Raw milk or foods prepared from raw milk may be contaminated with dangerous bacteria capable of causing severe illness."

**I make products such as skin creams, lotions, and shampoos. Can I sell them at the farmer's market?** Yes, these items can be sold at a farmer's market without any permit since they are not food items meant for human consumption.



Visit: [www.islandcountywa.gov/657/Temporary-Food-Establishments](https://www.islandcountywa.gov/657/Temporary-Food-Establishments) for more information

