



Produce and Cottage Food Vendor Guidance for the 2017 Season Updated 5.24.17

Fresh produce sold at farmers markets and cottage food products have become increasingly popular in recent years. These businesses allow entrepreneurs a unique opportunity to create and sell their products and provide a source of local food items for consumers. In order to offer clear guidance for vendors and consumers, DHHS is providing the following information for the upcoming 2017 season:

Fresh Produce Vendors

Vendors planning to sell fresh, whole vegetables and fruit at a farmers market or seasonal event such as a fair may do so without permitting. Produce should be offered in a natural state or after rinsing and trimming unnecessary parts or separating greens from roots. Once the produce is cut or processed, a retail, temporary, or cottage food permit may be required.

Providing Fresh Produce Samples at Farmers Markets

To safely offer produce samples, follow the guidelines below:

- Sample no more than one fruit/vegetable of each type sold at a time.
- Minimize bare hand contact by using gloves, tongs, papers or other approved methods of minimizing bare hand contact.
- Either use a disposable knife for cutting and use a new disposable utensil every time a new sample is cut, or have enough utensils on hand to assure that a new sampling utensil is used for every 4 hours samples are cut.

Other Foods

Some foods sold in a produce stand require additional permits, such as a retail or temporary food permit. Examples include:

- Selling cut or processed fruits or vegetables such as shucked peas or pre-cut fruit require a Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) retail or temporary food permit.
- Eggs must be kept at 45° F or below and require a MOA retail or temporary food permit.
- Meat and seafood, even if prepackaged and frozen, requires a MOA retail or temporary food permit to sell.

Cottage Food Vendors

Cottage foods are non-potentially hazardous food products made in a home kitchen for direct sales to the consumer that do not require time/temperature control for safety (TCS). Cottage foods include

baked goods, relishes, fresh salsas, pickled or fermented vegetables, candies, dried herbs and seasonings, vinegars, trail mix, etc.

Some examples of products that are not cottage foods and thus must be made in a commercial kitchen are fresh or dried meats, garlic in oil mixtures, dairy products, fresh vegetable juices, and non-acidic canned foods.

Selling cottage food products to restaurants, wholesalers, on the internet, phone or via the mail is not permitted. Annual vendor sales cannot exceed \$25,000.

How to Become a Cottage Food Vendor

- Obtain an annual municipal cottage food permit via variance. Apply at the Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services at 825 L Street, 3rd floor, between 8:30am-4:30pm. If you plan on providing samples at farmer's markets, make sure to include this in the application.
- Obtain a food worker's card issued by the Municipality or other food worker card program approved by the Municipality prior to the permit being issued. Visit muni.org/foodcard.
- Label products with the name, physical address, and telephone number of the individual who prepared the food OR with the Alaska business license number.
- Comply with applicable municipal laws and zoning ordinances that apply to conducting a business from one's home residence.
- Display conspicuously to consumers the statement "THESE PRODUCTS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO STATE OR MUNICIPAL INSPECTION" on a card, placard, or sign posted at the point of sale or on the label of each food product that is packaged.
*Note: A facility with a private water supply and/or on-site sewage system must assure that the water supply is potable and the on-site sewage system has been approved.

Guidelines for Safe Cottage Food Production

DHHS provides the following guidelines for home kitchen food safety production. If you have any questions about safe food preparation do not hesitate to contact our Environmental Health Services staff for assistance.

- Children or pets are not allowed in the home kitchen during the preparation of cottage food products.
- All food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils are to be washed, rinsed, and sanitized prior to beginning operations each time cottage food products are made.
- All food preparation areas are to be free of rodents and pests.
- When cottage foods are being prepared, no one who is ill should enter the kitchen, assist with preparation or packaging.
- All food handlers must wash their hands with warm water and soap, scrubbing vigorously, prior to beginning food preparation or cookware washing.
- Avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods through the use of single-service gloves, bakery papers, tongs, or other utensils.

Cottage Food Sampling Guidelines

Sampling can be an important part of a cottage food operation. Vendors may provide free samples of cottage food products. Be sure to provide safe samples by adhering to the following:

- **Safe at home sample preparation.** Cottage food operators may prepare samples in their home kitchen and serve them at the point of sale. This should be done by providing single use items such as disposable single use utensils, toothpicks, etc. Since there is no contact with the samples, these vendors are not required to have hand washing or utensil washing stations set up on site.
- **Safe on-site sample preparation.** When samples that require food product handling are prepared onsite at the point of sale, there should be no bare hand contact with products. Hands must be properly washed and dried before sample preparation, and all samples should be prepared using tongs, single use gloves, single use papers, or other sanitary methods to maintain food safety during preparation. When preparing samples onsite, vendors need to have a temporary hand wash station available and, either enough utensils to allow for switching of utensils every four hours or as often as needed if they become soiled.

Alternatively, vendors may have a three basin setup available with wash, rinse, and sanitize steps to properly clean reusable utensils throughout the day. An approved sanitizer should be present for use in sanitizing utensils. If chlorine is used a 50ppm solution is required, or 200 ppm solution for quat solutions for sanitizing utensils.

Municipal Permitting and Variance Fees

While vendors only selling fresh produce are not required to obtain a municipal permit, other vendors may need to apply for a permit or variance. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss which permit best fits your operation. Fees may be prorated and are outlined below.

\$50 - Cottage food one-time variance fee of \$50

\$35-\$75 - Temporary permit (varies based on length of operation)

\$130-\$330 - Seasonal temporary permit (varies based on risk type)

\$260-\$660 - Retail permit (varies based on risk type)*

*note: may also require a plan review fee

For more information, call the DHHS Environmental Health Services Program at 907.343.4200 or Public Information Officer at 907.343.4622. Visit our website at muni.org/food.