



# Catering Guidelines



To make the caterer plan review process as easy as possible, review the following guidelines to assure that you have all the necessary information required for plan review.

## Items submitted to SFDPH

1. Completed [Application](#) Form
2. Copy of caterer's [Certified Food Safety Certificate](#)
3. Copy of Catering Menu
4. Completed [Commissary/Permitted Kitchen Verification](#) Form by owner of catering facility
5. Floor plan of Commissary: indicate all equipment, sinks, and storage spaces
6. Standard Operation Plan: brief description of food safety practices in regards to the cooking, cooling, sanitizing, and transportation to events.
7. [Business Registration Certificate](#)

**Note:** Zoning Application, and Fire Referral are only needed if the caterer using the facility is not categorized as 'Commissary' or 'Catering Facility'. For example: a restaurant .

## Definitions

**Caterer** – is any person/entity who supplies food and beverages and/or related services to any off premise public or private function. Per the California Retail Food Code, caterers are required to have a valid health permit. If you are catering without a health permit, you must cease all food preparation until a valid health permit has been obtained. A catering permit does **not** allow direct retail sales.

**Commissary** – A food facility that services Mobile Food Facilities, Mobile Support Units, Vending Machines, Caterers, Temporary Food Facilities, PFRs, or other possible food vendors where any of the following occur:

- (a) Food, containers, or supplies are stored
- (b) Food is prepared or prepackaged for sale or service at other locations
- (c) Utensils are cleaned
- (d) Liquid and solid wastes are disposed, or potable water is obtained

**Catering Facility** – A food facility that services Vending Machines, Caterers, Temporary Food Facilities, PFRs, or other possible food vendors where any of the following occur:

- (a) Food, containers, or supplies are stored
  - (b) Food is prepared or prepackaged for sale or service at other locations
  - (c) Utensils are cleaned
  - (d) Liquid and solid wastes are disposed, or potable water is obtained
- Does **not** allow Mobile Food Facilities or Mobile Support Units

## Application

Correctly filled out application, providing all applicable information, forms, and fees.

### Food Safety Certification

- A copy of approved Food Safety Certificate must be available at all events and turned in with application (note: certificate is valid for five (5) years).

### Itemized Menu

- Provide a menu of all the food you will be serving, including condiments and iced beverages.

### Facility Information

- Provide Commissary or permitted kitchen verification form filled out by owner of facility agreeing with all requirements listed on form
- Provide floor plan of facility (commissary/permitted kitchen)

## Catering Operation Requirements

**Please Note:** All caterers, catering employees and volunteers MUST comply with the following requirements during preparation and all hours of operation. All catering operations are subject to inspection by the Environmental Health Division.

- All food shall be held and served in accordance with California Retail Food Code during the actual event.
- Use of food prepared or stored at home is prohibited at a catered function.
- Food served during the event must be displayed in a safe, sanitary manner and protected from contamination. Sneeze guards may be required.
- All foods, beverages, utensils and related equipment must be stored at least 6 inches off of the floor.
- Food shall be held at or below 41°F or at or above 135°F during service.  
**NOTE:** This will require sufficient equipment to maintain required temperatures for all perishable food at a catering site (e.g. steam tables, chafing dishes, refrigerators, coolers).
- Food may be served by employees or self-service.
- Sanitary food handling techniques must be practiced at all times. Whenever practical, food handlers shall use tongs, disposable plastic gloves or single use tissue when handling food.
- Self-service displays shall be monitored by catering staff.
- Self-service displays shall be protected from overhead contamination.
- For self serve items, an adequate utensil for serving must be provided.

## Catering Transport

- The catering vehicle must be adequately constructed so as to protect the food, foodservice equipment, and utensils from contamination at all times during transportation. Interior surfaces of the vehicle must be clean.
- Hot foods that are potentially hazardous must be kept at a minimum temperature of 135 degrees F at all times and be transported in NSF listed thermal transport containers similar to Cambro type. Hot transport containers must be durable, smooth, and easily cleanable.
- Cold foods that are potentially hazardous must be kept at or below 41 degrees F at all times and be transported in containers capable of maintaining temperatures at or below 41 degrees F. Cold transport containers must be durable, smooth, and easily cleanable (cardboard and Styrofoam are not acceptable).
- A calibrated metal stem/probe type thermometer with a temperature range of 0 - 220 degrees F, accurate to +/-2 degrees F, must be available at all times to monitor temperatures of food prior to transport, upon arrival, and at the time of serving.
- A log of temperatures for each food served at a catered event must be kept for review at the time of the routine inspection. The log must include the date, time, and address of the event along with each food and beverage item served. See attached sample temperature log sheet.
- When transport time exceeds one (1) hour, mechanical refrigeration and mechanical hot holding equipment must be provided.

## Hand Washing Facilities

- Adequate hand washing facilities shall be provided inside of food prep area(s)
- Adequate hand washing facilities shall be provided adjacent to service area.
- Restrooms with adequate hand washing facilities shall be located within 200 feet of service area.

## Open-Air BBQ Facilities

- An open-air BBQ may be used in conjunction with a catered event. The BBQ may be used for cooking, roasting or broiling over live coals (wood, charcoal or gas heated). The BBQ may not be used for warming foods or maintaining food temperatures in pots or other containers.