

Food Safety Guidelines for Farmers Markets

This leaflet will explain how to meet the food safety laws that apply to you while trading at a farmers' market. It covers the basic areas that apply to typical farmers' market stalls.

Farmers' markets are the subject of routine checking by food safety officers from your local Environmental Health and Trading Standards Department, who may visit you on the day a market is held. In addition, the farm or other premises from which you operate may also be subject to inspection.

1. Registration

If you sell food, (which includes drink) you must register with the local authority where your business is based, ie where you produce, store or prepare the food, or where you keep a vehicle used in connection with the food business. This information must be available to the market organiser and the authorised officer who may inspect your food stall during market trading.

To register with the Vale of White Horse District Council please visit:
www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk or call 01235 540375

2. Transportation

Food transported to a market must be wrapped, covered or placed in suitable containers to prevent contamination. Vehicles and containers should be kept clean and in good repair and the food should be kept separate from other items.

Simple cardboard boxes and paper-lined crates are fine for most agricultural produce but you will need higher grade materials, such as metal or plastic crates, for bakery products and meats.

High risk foods must be kept cold (below 8 °C) to prevent the growth of dangerous bacteria. These include soft or semi-hard cheeses, most other dairy products, cooked meat and vegetable products, most smoked or cured meat and fish and shellfish.

Insulated containers with icepacks and a thermometer are usually sufficient and the temperature must be checked and recorded regularly). Larger volume traders should consider using refrigerated vehicles.

3. Water supply and washing facilities

There must be an adequate supply of potable water available for hand, equipment and food washing. All food stalls must have access to suitable facilities for washing hands, utensils and cleaning equipment. Wash basins for cleaning hands must be provided with hot and cold (or appropriately mixed) running water, materials for cleaning hands and for hygienic drying. If services are not available at the stall/site, insulated containers of a suitable capacity and which can maintain the water at an adequate temperature may be used.

Communal wash facilities are only acceptable for stalls selling low risk foods.

4. Storage and Display

All unwrapped foods which are displayed for sale must be kept off of the ground, out of reach of customers and protected from contamination by providing a cover over the top, back and sides of the stall.

High risk foods will need to be displayed at or below 8°C

Ready to eat foods must be kept separate from raw foods.

You should avoid directly handling unwrapped foods when serving customers. Spoons, tongs, plastic wrapping or disposable gloves can be used to prevent hands from coming into direct contact with food.

5. Preparation

Where food preparation and/or cooking is to be carried out at the event, a sink with hot and cold water must be available for the washing of utensils, equipment or food.

Where unwrapped food is to be prepared or handled you must make regular and frequent use of a hand wash basin with hot and cold water, soap and hygienic hand drying. It is your responsibility to ensure that these facilities are provided at your stall.

Surfaces and equipment which come into contact with food must be kept clean and disinfected. You will need to bring a suitable disinfectant with you.

Wherever possible separate equipment should be used for ready to eat foods, to minimise the risk of cross contamination.

Everyone handling unwrapped foods of the types listed above must wear clean protective over-clothing.

Smoking at your food stall is prohibited. Please make sure that you leave the stall if you wish to smoke and wash your hands thoroughly before handling food again.

You will need to bring bags or bins for the collection of food waste and other rubbish. Arrangements for the collection and disposal of refuse will be made by the market organiser.

Food should be cooked to 75°C for 30 seconds. Temperatures should be checked and recorded regularly with a disinfected probe thermometer.

5. Temperature Control

High risk food must be transported, stored and displayed at a temperature of 8°C or below. It is good practice to aim for a target food temperature of 5°C.

Foods may be displayed unrefrigerated for a one-off period of 4 hours.

Hot food on display must be kept above 63°C if it is hot held for more than 2 hours.

Suitable thermometers should be available and it is good practice to check and record the temperature of the food throughout the day.

6. Samples/Tasters

You will want to introduce your customers to as wide a range of your foods as possible and having tasting samples available is a good way to get their attention. Bear in mind that even though you may give samples away free of charge, the law sees this transaction as a sale, and their production and handling is still subject to legal control.

Samples need to be protected from contamination such as undue handling, usually either from inquisitive pets or equally inquisitive children, so ensure samples are stored high up. If your customers have to handle your food, try and make sure they don't touch other samples on the plate - cocktail sticks or tongs help to stop this.

Most importantly, don't leave food out that must be chilled for long periods, so keep quantities to a minimum and throw out uneaten food if it has been out of refrigeration for a long time. The law permits a maximum of four hours in most cases but it is best if high risk food is kept under temperature control.

7. Design and Cleanliness

Internal surfaces must be constructed of washable materials and kept in a good state of repair to enable effective cleaning and minimise the risk of contamination to food.

The stall must be cleaned down prior to handling foods and regularly thereafter to remove visible dirt and debris. Surfaces which come into contact with open high risk food must be disinfected prior to starting work and during use.

8. Personal Hygiene and service

Every person working in a food handling area shall maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and shall wear suitable clean and, where appropriate, protective clothing.

Hand washing is important, smoking is unacceptable when handling open foods, and cuts must be covered with a waterproof dressing. If you have an illness which could be transmitted through food, you should not be working in a food-handling environment.

9. Waste Storage

Food waste and other refuse must be contained in a suitable receptacle and stored in a way which will not attract pests. Refuse and waste must then be disposed of appropriately.

10. Training

All food handlers must be supervised and instructed and/or trained in food hygiene matters to an appropriate level depending on the type of food handled. Information on the level of training or instruction required and details on suitable courses can be obtained from the local authority.

The Vale of White Horse runs Level 2 Award in Food Safety in catering regularly. For further information about this course please call 01235 540375 or visit www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

11. Further information

For information on labelling and weights and measures please contact Trading standards at Oxfordshire County Council by visiting <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/trading-standards> or calling 0845 051 0845

For further information about food safety, please contact the Environmental Health department at the Vale of White Horse District Council by visiting: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/business/health-regulations/foodhygiene> or calling 01235 540375

guidance. For further information, please see the Industry Guide to Good Hygiene Practice: Markets and Fairs Guide, ISBN 1-902423-00-3

Some information taken from guidance note produced by Brighton and Hove City Council and Eastbourne Borough Council