



## **Catering and Host Facilities Frequently Asked Questions**

➤ What is a catering operation?

Answer: A food service operation conducted by a permanent permitted food facility (ex. restaurant, commissary commercial kitchen) approved for food preparation where the food is served, or limited food preparation is conducted, at a location other than its permitted location, whether as part of a contracted offsite food service event (ex. wedding, family reunion, private party) or when operating in conjunction with a host facility for direct food sales.

Catering operation shall not include either of the following:

- (1) Food ordered as take-out or delivery from a food facility, where the food is provided to the consumer for self-service.
- (2) A food facility that is participating as part of a community event.

➤ What are the requirements for a person in charge at a catering operation?

Answer: The Person In Charge (PIC) on behalf of the Catering Operation shall be onsite during operating hours and ensure each of the following:

- Protection of the food from contamination during service
- Food preparation areas have overhead protection
- Provide utensils for single use to eliminate re-use of a soiled/contaminated utensil
- Ensure consumers obtain clean plates or utensils when returning to the self-service food display
- Replace utensils that become contaminated with clean and sanitized utensils
- Discard any potentially hazardous foods not consumed or sold that were subject to temperature abuse
- Discard any food that has become contaminated or is suspected of being contaminated
- Have adequate knowledge of major food allergens, food identified as major food allergens, and the symptoms that a major food allergen could cause in a sensitive individual who has an allergic reaction
- Ensure that all food handlers are in good health and free of any gastrointestinal symptoms or illness
- To self-close a food service operation for any imminent health hazard including but not limited to: lack of potable water, lack of hot water, lack of electricity, sewage overflow, vermin infestation or other conditions that could lead to illness, injury or death
- To accompany an inspection performed by an enforcement officer during normal operating hours
- To address any violations resulting in imminent health hazards that may result in immediate closure of the operation

➤ Does a catering operation require a health permit to operate?

Answer: Yes

➤ What are the requirements to obtain a catering operational permit?

Answer: Complete and submit a catering application form and all required supporting documents for review and approval. A document review fee at the department hourly rate is required before staff can begin reviewing your application and supporting documentation. Supporting documents include:

- Standard Operating Procedures
- A complete food and drink menu
- A copy of a current Food Safety Manager's Certificate
- Log template showing manner in which food service activities will be kept for a minimum of 90 days
- A Commissary Verification Form
- Manufacturer Specification Sheets for all equipment used to produce, hold, and transport food. Shall be ANSI commercial grade.

Depending on which commissary is chosen, a site inspection of the commissary may be needed to verify that the facility has adequate space and amenities to accommodate the catering operation. Once the application and supporting documentation is reviewed and approved, the applicant may apply for a permit to operate. The annual permit fee is required before the permit can be issued. The fee is waived if the catering operation is ancillary to an existing permitted food facility.

➤ What are standard operating procedures (SOP)?

Answer: A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a set of step-by-step instructions compiled by the business owner to help workers carry out complex routine operations.

➤ What is limited food preparation?

Answer: The California Retail Food Code Section 113818 definition is:

“Limited food preparation” means food preparation that is restricted to one or more of the following:

- Heating, frying, baking, roasting, popping, shaving of ice, blending, steaming or boiling of hot dogs, or assembly of non-prepackaged food.
- Dispensing and portioning of non-potentially hazardous food.
- Holding, portioning, and dispensing of any foods that are prepared for satellite food service by the onsite permanent food facility or prepackaged by another approved source.
- Holding, portioning, and dispensing of any foods that are prepared by a catering operation for a host facility.
- Slicing and chopping of food on a heated cooking surface during the cooking process.
- Cooking and seasoning to order.
- Juicing or preparing beverages that are for immediate service, in response to an individual consumer order, that do not contain frozen milk products.

“Limited food preparation” does not include any of the following:

- Slicing and chopping unless it is on the heated cooking surface.
- Thawing.
- Cooling of cooked, potentially hazardous food.
- Grinding raw ingredients or potentially hazardous food.
- Reheating of potentially hazardous foods for hot holding, except for steamed or boiled hot dogs and tamales in the original, inedible wrapper.
- Except as authorized in bullet point three (3) above, hot holding of nonprepackaged, potentially hazardous food, except for roasting corn on the cob, steamed or boiled hot dogs, and tamales in the original, inedible wrapper
- Washing of foods.

- Cooking of potentially hazardous foods for later use.
- Handling, manufacturing, freezing, processing, or packaging of milk, milk products, or products resembling milk products subject to licensing under Division 15 (commencing with Section 32501) of the Food and Agricultural Code.

➤ Who can I sell my food to?

Answer: Food can be sold to consumers who are organizers/planners of a contracted private or semi-private event (example: wedding, birthday party, corporate luncheon). Food may also be sold directly to customers if you are operating in conjunction with a permitted host facility. However, food cannot be sold for resale to other food facilities, retailers, or wholesalers. In order to sell food as take-out or direct customer delivery for self-serve out of a commissary, a Platform Kitchen Operational permit is required.

➤ Am I required to store all my retail food, utensils, and catering equipment at a commissary?

Answer: Yes, unless your commissary is unable to provide you long term storage amenities, then you may store dry goods, utensils and equipment at home in a sanitary manner. You must complete and submit the Alternative Storage Variance form for approval if storing any catering utensils or equipment at your personal home. No PHFs can be stored in a personal home.

➤ How long am I required to keep event records, including: location, date, time of offsite event, menu, and departure and arrival food temperature logs?

Answer: 90 days and they also need to be furnished to NCDEH upon request.

➤ What type of vehicle am I allowed to transport my food in?

Answer: Food shall be transported in a manner that meets the following requirements:

(1) The interior floor, sides, and top of the food holding area shall be constructed of a smooth, washable, impervious material capable of withstanding frequent cleaning.

(2) The food holding area shall be constructed and operated so that no liquid wastes can drain onto any street, sidewalk, or premises.

➤ Is my catering operation subject to annual routine NCDEH health inspections?

Answer: Yes. Our department policy is to schedule a time to meet you at your commissary at a time when you are actively conducting food preparation in order to view your food preparation and sanitization practices. The local enforcement agency may also conduct an inspection in response to a complaint, foodborne illness allegation, or nuisance violation.

➤ Are there limitations on the amount of catering operation sales?

Answer: No.

➤ Do I need any special food safety training or certification?

Answer: Yes, the catering operator shall successfully pass an approved and accredited food safety certification examination. Any individual, other than the operator, who is involved in the preparation, storage, or service of food shall be subject to the food handler card requirements.

➤ What is my legal responsibility as a catering operator in ensuring that my food is safe?

Answer: It is the catering operator's responsibility to know and follow the California Retail Food Code regulations pertaining to their catering operation. This includes Chapter 1 to Chapter 8, Chapter 10.1, and Chapter 13

➤ What is a Host Facility?

Answer: A "host facility" means a facility located in a brewery, winery, commercial building, or another location as approved by the local enforcement agency, that meets applicable requirements to support a catering operation that provides food directly to individual consumers for a limited period up to four hours in any twelve hour period.

➤ What are the requirements for a Host Facility?

Answer:

- A host facility permit application shall be submitted to NCDEH.
- Submit the standard operating procedures for the food operation.
- Provide access to potable hot (120°F) and cold water for the caterer to use.
- Mop sink or janitorial sink shall comply with California Retail Food Code (CRFC) Section 114279 requirements.
- Electricity to power portable mechanical refrigeration equipment.
- A commercial permanent restroom located no more than 200 feet from the area where the caterer serves.
- Host facility would be subject to plan check requirements and an annual inspection.
- Host facility must provide a suitable location where a caterer can set up their operations.
- The host facility must ensure that operations comply with all applicable codes in their jurisdiction, including but not limited to zoning and the Fire Department.
- Submission of a site plan that indicates the location of the food service operation.
- Specifications of equipment that will be provided to support the catering operation.

➤ What are the requirements for a Caterer and Host facility?

Answer: A caterer while operating at a Host Facility shall be able to:

- Utilize portable mechanical refrigeration
- Use an approved handwashing station located in food preparation area in host facility.
- Conduct limited food preparation.
- Operate from a permitted host facility that is approved by NCDEH
- A caterer can also conduct traditional catering food service to private events.

➤ Are host facilities subject to annual routine NCDEH health inspections?

Answer: Yes. Host facility routine annual inspections will be conducted unannounced at the location of the business. The local enforcement agency may also conduct an inspection in response to a complaint, foodborne illness allegation, or nuisance violation.

➤ What is my legal responsibility as a Host Facility in ensuring that my food is safe?

Answer:

- It is the Host food facility operator's responsibility to know and follow the California Retail Food Code regulations pertaining to their host catering operation.
- A Host food facility shall report any foodborne illness or outbreak to the local health department and to the State Department of Public Health within 24 hours.

➤ Can a host be used as a commissary?

Answer: No, a host facility cannot be used as a commissary.

➤ Will a host facility be allowed to have a BBQ?

Answer: Yes, catering could include an open-air barbecue and an outdoor wood-burning oven when working in conjunction with a permitted host food facility. Both, host facility and catering, shall comply with zoning and fire department requirements.

➤ What is a food facility?

Answer:

(a) "Food facility" means an operation that stores, prepares, packages, serves, vends, or otherwise provides food for human consumption at the retail level, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) An operation where food is consumed on or off the premises, regardless of whether there is a charge for the food.

(2) A place used in conjunction with the operations described in this subdivision, including, but not limited to, storage facilities for food-related utensils, equipment, and materials.

(b) "Food facility" includes permanent and nonpermanent food facilities, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Public and private school cafeterias.

(2) Restricted food service facilities.

(3) Licensed health care facilities, except as provided in paragraph (12) of subdivision (c).

(4) Commissaries.

(5) Mobile food facilities.

(6) Mobile support units.

(7) Temporary food facilities.

(8) Vending machines.

(9) Certified farmers' markets, for purposes of permitting and enforcement pursuant to Section 114370.

(10) Farm stands, for purposes of permitting and enforcement pursuant to Section 114375.

(11) Fishermen's markets.

(12) Catering operation.

(13) Host facility.