



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FOOD SAMPLING AT DIRECT MARKETING VENUES

Food sampling at direct marketing venues serves to provide customers with an opportunity to learn about farm fresh products and essentially “try before they buy.” As a way to attract attendees to a farmers market through cooking demonstrations, or as a selling technique within a vendor’s booth, sampling can be a very effective marketing tool. To provide samples at any direct marketing event open to the public, whether as a featured demonstration or as an agricultural producer, strict guidelines must be adhered to and food safety protocols followed.

Please note that while sampling is generally allowed, local regulations may restrict sampling by adding requirements or disallow sampling altogether. Local regulations supersede state regulations and each market should contact their County Health Official (www.nysacho.org) and their NYSDOH District Office (www.health.state.ny.us) to verify local regulations before allowing sampling in the market.

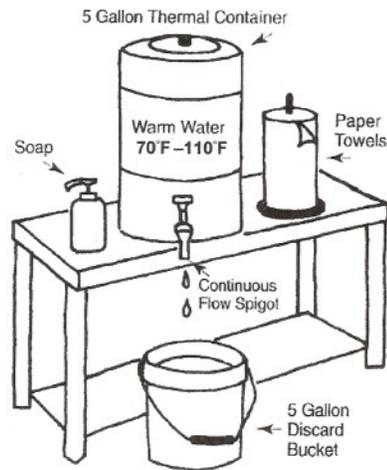
License or permit required:

- Agricultural producers wishing to sample their own products at farmers markets must obtain permission from market managers.
- Department of Health Temporary Food Service Permit is required IF foods prepared on site will be sampled. Contact the local health department for local requirements.

Sanitation:

- Start with clean food. Thoroughly rinse fresh produce with potable, running water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running, potable water.
- Use clean tools. Equipment and utensils must be easily cleanable and in good condition. Food contact surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water followed by an approved sanitizer and allowed to air dry before and in-between use. Single use paper towels can be used on food contact surfaces.
- Personal hygiene is important. All handlers of food samples should have clean body, hair and clothes and be free from any signs of illness or open sores. Hands should be clean and washed any time they become soiled, i.e. after using restroom facilities, handling live animals, eating and drinking. Note that anti-bacterial gels are not a substitute for hand washing.
- A hand wash station in the booth is required. It can be a permanent facility or a temporary station (see illustration), but must have warm water at 105°F in a container with a valve permitting free-flowing water when activated, soap, disposable hand towels, and a means of collecting “gray” (waste) water.

Temporary Hand Washing Station



What is the recommended method for washing hands?

Wet hands with potable, warm water, apply soap, and work up a lather. Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds. Clean under the nails and between the fingers. Rub fingertips of each hand in suds on palm of opposite hand. Rinse under potable, running water. Dry hands with a single-use towel.

What is an adequate sanitizing solution?

1-2 teaspoon household bleach (5.25% sodium hypochlorite) per 1 gallon potable water at approximately 75°F will achieve a solution of at least 100 parts per million (ppm). Note more bleach is *not* better, between 70 – 135 ppm is an acceptable range. As sanitizer breaks down over time, use test strips from sanitizer test kits or a pool test kit to ensure sanitizer strength. Bleach solutions cannot be allowed to fall below 50 ppm.

Preparation:

- Protect foods at all times, using covers, to prevent contamination.
- Agricultural producers of raw fruits and vegetables and vendors producing foods as a NYSDAM registered Home Processor may provide samples to customers. Vendors of potentially hazardous foods (including eggs, dairy, meat, poultry and seafood), prepared or processed foods must bring pre-packaged individual serving size samples from a permitted or licensed source unless samples are prepared under a NYSDOH Temporary Food Service Permit.
- Proper temperature of samples must be maintained during transit to and while at market. Cook and maintain all foods according to proper temperature. Use an instant read food thermometer to ensure accuracy.
 - Hot foods must be kept at 140°F or higher at all times*
 - Cold foods must be kept at 41°F or colder
 - Shell eggs must be maintained at 45°F or colder
 - Frozen foods must be kept at 0°F or colder until cooked
- Any foods held outside of the appropriate temperature range for 2 hours or more, must be discarded.
- Ice used to chill samples should be made from potable water. Containers should provide for drainage to ensure that samples do not sit in melted ice water.
- Vendors should provide trash receptacles for trash generated from sampling. Trash receptacles should be covered and emptied frequently.

**There are differences in temperature requirements determined by the regulatory agency. The recommendations above comply with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, as well as the NYS Department of Health.*

Distribution:

- Supervise food sampling. Dispense or serve food samples (avoid self-service) to interested consumers.
- Use single serve portions. Avoid dipping into a common container to prevent cross contamination.
- Utilize disposable food contact materials, i.e. toothpicks, plastic utensils, etc.
- No bare hand contact. Use disposable food grade gloves, tongs, deli paper or napkins to prevent bare hand contact. Gloves should be replaced whenever soiled, torn, changing tasks, or after 4 hours of continual use.
- Samples should be provided free of charge to the customer and bite-sized as the intent is only to show the quality of the product.

