

Food Safety Guidelines for Farmers' Markets

In the past, when people thought of a farmers' market, they thought of fresh fruit and vegetables for purchase that they could take home and make into delicious salads and other dishes. However, what was once an extension of the basic farm produce stand has now evolved into a variety of foods from whole unprocessed fruits and vegetables to seafood, meats, salsas, baked goods, pizzas and many other prepared and processed food items. These markets are a great way for consumers to connect with local farms and the products they offer, but the more complex market foods become, the greater the risk consumers face of possibly contracting foodborne illness. With the increased complexity of items being offered for sale at farmers' markets across Connecticut, it is important that farmers and local health departments work in cooperation to provide the residents of Connecticut safe, fresh, locally grown and prepared products that won't cause foodborne illness. This publication was developed to provide market masters with an overview of regulations that pertain to prepared food items and to discuss basic food safety practices that will need to be followed within their respective markets. Working together with the local health department, vendors will be able to provide consumers with excellent products in a safe and healthy manner.

Internal Cooking Temperatures:

Whole Roasts, Corned Beef, Pork Roasts:

130°F.	121 minutes
140°F.	12 minutes
145°F.	3 minutes

Shell Eggs, Fish, Meat (Including Pork)

145°F.	15 seconds
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Ground or Comminuted Meat and Fish Products:

145°F.	3 minutes
150°F.	1 minute
155°F.	15 seconds
158°F.	Instantaneously

Poultry, Ground or Comminuted Poultry

Stuffed: Fish, Meat, Pasta, Poultry or Stuffing containing PHF ingredients:

165°F.	15 seconds
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Raw animal food cooked in a microwave oven shall be:

rotated or stirred throughout or midway during cooking to compensate for uneven distribution of heat; covered to retain surface moisture; heated to a temperature of at least 165° F. in all parts of the food, and allowed to stand covered for 2 min. after cooking.

Cold and Hot Holding Temperatures:

45° F. or less or 140° F. or more for all potentially hazardous foods except whole beef and pork roasts which may be held hot at **130°F.** or above

Ready-to-eat food taken from a commercially processed, hermetically sealed container shall be heated to **140° F. or greater** for hot holding. Cooked, cooled, and refrigerated food that is prepared for immediate service in response to an individual consumer order may be served at any temperature.

Cooling Requirements:

Cooked Potentially Hazardous Food shall be cooled:

140°F. ⇒ 70°F.	within 2 hours
70°F. ⇒ ≤45°F.	within an additional 4 hours

Reheating Temperatures:

Potentially Hazardous Food that is cooked, cooled, and reheated for hot holding shall be reheated so that all parts of the food reach a temperature of at least **165°F. for 15 seconds within 2 hours** except remaining unsliced portions of roast beef which may be reheated to **145°F. for 3 minutes within 2 hours.**

Ready-to-eat food taken from a commercially processed, hermetically sealed container shall be heated to a temperature of at least 140°F. for hot holding. Cooked, cooled, and refrigerated food that is prepared for immediate service in response to an individual consumer order may be served at any temperature.

Selling Food Products

Some products sold at farmers' markets can present a risk to consumers, depending on how the product is prepared and sold. Each market master, in cooperation with the local health authority, should decide which products can and cannot be sold, provide a list of foods to be sold to the local health department, and include this information in the bylaws or rules for his or her market. Market masters must include the following:

- Will the market allow processed foods?
- Will there be food preparation on site?
- Will the market allow food samples to be given away?
- Is the off-site base of operations (where the food is stored or prepared) licensed and inspected by a regulatory agency, if applicable?

Classification of a Farmers' Market

The Department of Public Health (DPH) advises local health departments that farmers' markets offering foods other than raw, whole produce, be regulated as temporary food service establishments, per the Connecticut Public Health Code section 19-13-B42. This allows the local director of health to relax some of the structural requirements normally associated with permanent food service establishments. It should be noted that a temporary food service establishment may also contain retail food components (packaged and bulk raw foods) that may be regulated by Connecticut Public Health Code section 19-13-B40. Ultimately, the classification and regulation of each farmers' market will be determined by the types of foods offered and the manner in which they are processed or prepared. The local health departments are responsible for licensing and inspecting any establishment that prepares or offers food and/or drink to the public, whether for consumption on or off-site. These departments will have the necessary information for each vendor to comply with state and local codes, if the food items offered are subject to such regulation. DPH advises the local health departments to provide a seasonal license to vendors attending the market every week, if such a license is required by the local health authority..

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Risky Foods

Certain types of food allow for the rapid and progressive growth of pathogens and are deemed "potentially hazardous foods."

Foods classified in this category include dairy products, meat poultry, seafood, shellfish, eggs, sliced melons, raw sprouts, cut tomatoes, tofu, and garlic-in-oil mixtures. These products must be kept at proper temperatures to keep consumers safe.

Information on proper temperatures for these foods or products can be provided by the local health department.

Meat, poultry, dairy, egg products, and other potentially hazardous foods must always be transported to and from the market in facilities capable of maintaining the food at a temperature of 45°F or less.

Unless properly processed by commercial means, canned or jarred foods may pose a high risk of botulism. Such foods may include (but are not limited to) sauces, dressings, fruit butters, pickles, salsa, soup, and dips. All prepared and processed foods must be produced in a facility that is inspected by a regulatory agency to ensure safe preparation and handling practices. The only exemptions to this requirement are properly labeled jams, jellies, preserves, and maple syrup (CGS sec 21a-24b). All other processed and prepared foods to be sold at a farmers' market must come from an approved source and must be prepared at an approved, inspected facility. These facilities can be commercial kitchens, inspected church kitchens, or other retail or wholesale food establishments. Each vendor should make arrangements with the appropriate personnel to use these facilities. **Private kitchens cannot be used for processing or preparing foods.**

Food that is prepared for immediate consumption at the market must also be prepared using safe food handling procedures, in conformance with regulations. Cutting produce, preparing samples for consumers, and preparing sandwiches are all considered food preparation. Proper thawing of potentially hazardous foods must also be followed. The local health department will review your procedures and provide information on safe food handling and approved facilities.

Protect Food from Contamination

Open foods sold at a farmers' market, such as sliced or cubed cheese, must have an approved protective cover over the display area. This is especially important if the food is prepared on-site. Overhead awnings are an additional measure of protection and may be required by the local health authority. Although food samples are a good way to increase purchase of a product at the farmers' market, this practice must be performed with extreme caution and in conformance with the food protection controls approved by the local health authority. Ill food workers, unprotected sneezes and coughs, consumers' hands, and insects are major sources of potential food contamination.

Temperature Requirements and Storage

There are specific guidelines for the cooking temperature/time requirements of each type of raw, potentially hazardous food. Foods cooked on-site at a farmers' market must meet all temperature and time requirements. When held hot, potentially hazardous foods must be maintained at 140°F or above; cold potentially hazardous food being held must be maintained at 45°F or below. An accurate, acceptable temperature measuring device needs to be available for use in booths that require monitoring of storage, holding and cooking temperatures of potentially hazardous foods. Food storage at a farmers' market is somewhat difficult due to the equipment and space limitations.

While there are many sources of potential food contamination, here are a few tips to help decrease the likelihood that product contamination will occur from contact with raw foods, contaminated water, or ice.

- Use only clean, potable ice from an approved source.
- Be careful not to store ready-to-eat foods in direct contact with ice.
- Do not store raw foods in the same container as ready-to-eat foods.
- Drain ice continuously to avoid pooling water in the cold storage unit.

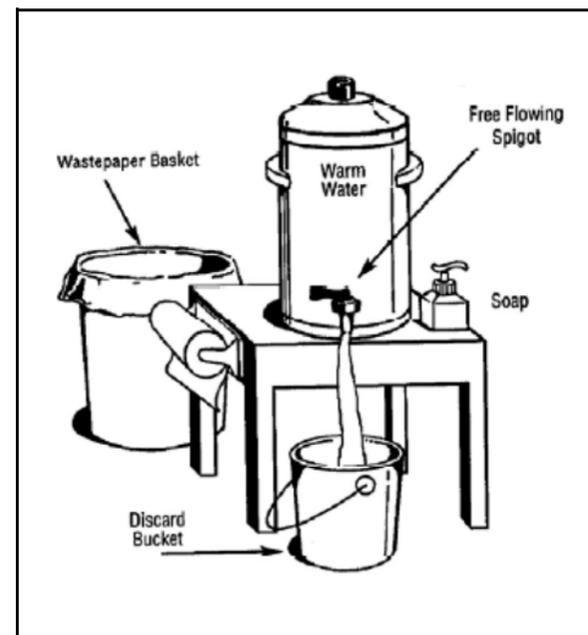
Infected Food Handlers

All vendors who handle food should note that it is absolutely imperative that any person experiencing symptoms of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, sore throat, or jaundice, must be excluded from handling any food products, utensils, single service paper goods, or linens, unless authorized to do so by the regulatory agency. It is equally important that any person diagnosed with salmonellosis, shigellosis, *E. coli* infection, hepatitis A, or norovirus infection be excluded. If a food handler is living in a household with someone who has been diagnosed with these illnesses, he or she might also need to be excluded from food handling. Lesions on the hands or wrists, including boils, must be covered and protected with an impermeable cover and a single-use glove. A tight fitting bandage must be used on lesions located on other parts of the body.

Food Contact Surfaces

If utensils are used to chop, cut, trim, serve or otherwise process food in any way, they must be properly washed, rinsed, sanitized, and allowed to air dry after use or at least every four hours throughout the event, as approved by the local health department. This also applies to food-contact surfaces such as cutting boards or prep tables.

Appropriate facilities to wash, rinse, and sanitize soiled utensils and other food contact surfaces must be available or an adequate supply of utensils, cutting boards, etc. must be provided for the full course of the event. To sanitize correctly, an approved sanitizer mixed at the appropriate concentration, equal to 50 ppm of chlorine must be available and located within the booth. Soiled equipment may be brought back to the approved base of operations for correct cleaning and sanitization.



Hand Washing Facilities

Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of disease. If a vendor is serving ready-to-eat foods, preparing foods on-site, or providing free samples of product, an approved handwashing facility will be required. Hand washing stations require potable running water, some form of hand cleaner (soap), disposable towels, and a waste container. Products such as hand sanitizers should not be used as a replacement for hand washing. When washing, vendors must wash their hands for at least 20 seconds. There is no set requirement for the number of hand washing stations required per person; however, the facilities must be accessible, unobstructed and convenient for use. The local health department will evaluate what is deemed adequate and provide guidance when necessary.

Approved Sources of Food

All food, including food ingredients used for the preparation of foods, demonstrations, and for sampling, must come from an approved source.

NOTE: Unprocessed, whole, raw fruits and vegetables shall be wholesome, free from spoilage, and otherwise deemed safe for human consumption based on generally recognized industry standards.

PROPER SET-UP



Sources:

- Purdue University- Publication EC-740 "Food Safety Regulations for Farmers' Markets"
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health- Publication RF-08 "Food Protection Program Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines"
- Nebraska Department of Agriculture- www.agr.state.ne.us/pub/da/farmmkt.htm
- Connecticut Public Health Code 19-13-B42

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