

## CATERING GUIDELINES

The California Retail Food Code regulates the sale or giving away of food to the public. Retail food facilities include restaurants, markets, bars, cafeterias, bakeries, and caterers. A caterer typically operates out of his or her own licensed facility or time/space is rented at a licensed facility operated by someone else. The location from which a catering operation is run must comply with all applicable health code requirements.

A person wishing to operate a catering business must first apply and submit an application to Contra Costa Environmental Health for a health permit. If the facility is new or remodeled, plans must be submitted for review and approval **prior** to commencing construction or remodel work. If the operation will occur in an existing facility, submit an application for a site evaluation. The Evaluation will determine if the location is suitable for catering, or if not, what upgrades must be done in order to obtain a health permit.

Once the health permit is issued, the catering operation can open for business.

### Operational Requirements

Caterers are required to comply with food safety and sanitation standards specified in the California Health & Safety Code. These standards are intended to provide the public with food that is safe and prepared under sanitary conditions. Large foodborne illness outbreaks have occurred at catered events, and it was later found that the food was not handled in a safe manner.

The food safety and sanitation standards include the following:

<b>Permit</b>	A caterer must have a valid health permit.
<b>Approved Facility</b>	A caterer must operate out of a facility that has a valid approved and current health permit. Foods may not be prepared or stored in a private home or other unapproved location.
<b>Storage</b>	All food, food service equipment, and related items must be stored in a licensed facility.
<b>Manager Training</b>	At least one person associated with a catering business must have successfully passed an ANSI-certified food safety examination.
<b>Employee Training</b>	Every employee in a catering business must be trained in food safety related to their task. For example, a cook who handles raw meats must know the minimum internal cooking temperatures for the meats prepared by the business.
<b>Handwashing Sinks</b>	A sufficient number of conveniently located handwashing sinks must be provided and supplied with hot and cold water, paper towels, and single-service soap. Employees must wash hands frequently.
<b>Temperature Control</b>	Potentially hazardous foods (PHF) must be kept at/or below 41°F or at-or above 135°F. During transportation a reliable means of keeping PHF at

	these temperatures must be provided.
<b>Sneeze-Guard Protection</b>	Where open food is provided for customer self-service, approved sneeze-guards must be provided. The sneeze-guards must interrupt a direct line between the customer's mouth and any exposed food, food contact surfaces, and utensils.
<b>Utensil Washing</b>	The facility used for catering must have an approved 3-compartment utensil sink with dual integral drainboards. The sink compartments must be large enough to accommodate the largest utensil to be washed.
<b>Food Prep Sink</b>	An approved food preparation sink must be provided in the facility. Both the utensil sink and prep sink must drain indirectly to the sewer via an air-gap (i.e., floor sink or funnel drain).
<b>Equipment</b>	All equipment used in a catering operation must be commercial-grade and meet applicable NSF standards.
<b>Ventilation</b>	Cooking equipment must be provided with an approved mechanical ventilation systems.
<b>Toilets</b>	Toilet facilities must be located within 200 feet of a catered function.

### Definitions

<b>Caterer</b>	A business that operates from a licensed food facility and that supplies food and related services, which may included off premises catering functions (e.g., receptions).
<b>Catering Vehicle</b>	A vehicle used to transport food and/or food service equipment to a catered function.
<b>Cook-for-Hire</b>	A person hired to prepare and/or serve food at a private function or home. All food prepared by the cook is handled at the location of the function or in the home. No food is stored, prepared, or handled off-site. <b>No health permit is required for a cook-for-hire.</b>
<b>Off Premises Catering</b>	A private or public function, at a location other than the catering business, where a caterer provides food or related services.
<b>Private Function</b>	A function restricted to a particular group from which the public is excluded. Examples include wedding receptions.
<b>Public Function</b>	A function to which the public is invited. Examples include fund raising benefits, fairs and open houses.

For a complete description of structural and equipment requirements, please see the latest plan check handouts available at Contra Costa Environmental Health. To obtain an application, handouts or additional information, please contact (925) 692-2500.