

Special Events Operating Guidelines For Food Vendors



Northeastern
PUBLIC HEALTH
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du Nord-Est

Applying for a Special Food Event Permit

1. Read this Guide so you are aware of the requirements outlined below.
2. Complete the Special Event Application.
3. Submit a completed application form to Northeastern Public Health (NEPH) **at least 15 days before the event**. It can be dropped off at one of our offices during business hours or emailed to inspections@neph.ca. Applications received after the deadline may be denied.
4. Once the completed application form has been received, it will be reviewed by a public health inspector.
5. If approved, the public health inspector will provide you with a permit. The permit is to be posted to a clearly visible location that attendees can easily see during the event.
6. Be sure to check with other agencies that may have requirements. For example, the local municipality, including the building and fire departments. Local police may also have requirements.

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Section 1: Guide for Special Food Events

The information contained in this package is to assist special event food vendors in providing safe food to the public.

Every person who operates a food premise must maintain and operate the food premises as required by the [Ontario Food Premises Regulation 493/17](#) under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#).

If the event is not [exempt](#) under the Food Premise Regulation, a special food event permit is required. See [Section 11](#) for more information on exempt groups and related requirements.

The Special Food Event Application allows an inspector to review your plan to ensure that safe food preparation, storage and handling are followed on-site.

Special Food Event Applications are **not** required for:

1. A catered event where the caterer is professionally recognized and inspected by NEPH or another health unit.
2. A private event taking place in an inspected facility where the event is run by the owners of the facility.
3. A private event that is closed to members of the public. Examples of private events are when only family or friends, group members, employees of a company, etc. are invited.

Refer to NEPH's [HealthWise Inspection Results](#) to determine if a caterer or food premise is inspected.

Be aware, your special event may be inspected during operation. If non-compliance is identified, you will be required to take any corrective actions by the inspector. If corrections cannot be made and/or an immediate health hazard exists, the premises may be closed.

Section 2: Food Preparation and Protection

1. At least one Certified Food Handler (CFH) may be required to be onsite during food preparation and at the time of the event.
2. Food must be coming from sources that are approved by the federal or Ontario provincial regulatory authorities (e.g., inspected meat, poultry, eggs, dairy products and fish).
3. Food must be prepared onsite at the event or offsite in an inspected facility. A private home is not an inspected facility.
4. All raw hazardous foods must be cut, chopped, and prepared in an inspected facility before the event. Only final cooking steps are to be done at the event.
5. Precooked meats are recommended whenever possible to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.
6. It is recommended to keep your menu simple and keep potentially hazardous foods to a minimum. See [Section 12](#) for examples of potentially hazardous foods.
7. All food must be protected against contamination from dust, insects, pests, and other contaminants during transportation, storage, and display. Food must be covered using a lid or food wrap (e.g., aluminum or plastic).
8. Food must be stored off the ground or floor.
9. To avoid potential contamination, raw hazardous foods must be stored separately or below ready-to-eat foods. For example, use separate containers/coolers for raw hazardous foods and ready-to-eat foods.
10. All food must be handled with tongs, spoons, scoops, etc. where possible to avoid direct hand contact with food.
11. Cooked foods must **not** be handled by utensils or placed onto surfaces that previously held raw hazardous foods (e.g. raw meat).

12. Condiments must be offered in either:

- a. Individual packages, or
- b. Dispensed from a container which protects from contamination (e.g., pump dispenser or squeeze bottle).

Open lid containers with utensils are **not** permitted.

13. Displayed foods must be pre-packaged, enclosed in cabinets, or covered to protect from potential sources of contamination.

14. Customer samples must be protected from contamination. Examples include individual containers, toothpicks, or a single-use serving spoon).

Section 3: Temperature Control

1. Potentially hazardous food must be transported, stored, and displayed at the required temperatures:
 - a. Cold hazardous foods must be maintained at 4°C (40°F) or colder.
 - b. Frozen hazardous foods must be kept frozen.
 - c. Hot hazardous foods must be maintained at 60°C (140°F) or hotter after cooking or reheating.
2. All potentially hazardous foods that are cooked or reheated must meet the temperatures listed below.

Food Item	Minimum Internal Cooking Temperature	Minimum Reheating Temperature
Whole poultry	82°C (180°F)	74°C (165°F)
Ground poultry, poultry products, poultry pieces	74°C (165°F)	74°C (165°F)
Food mixtures containing poultry, eggs, meat, fish, or other hazardous food	74°C (165°F)	74°C (165°F)
Pork, pork product, ground meat other than ground poultry	71°C (160°F)	71°C (160°F)
Fish	70°C (158°F)	70°C (158°F)
Seafood	74°C (165°F)	74°C (165°F)

3. Adequate temperatures must be maintained during transportation. Use thermal insulated containers with cold or hot packs, ice, or refrigerated trucks to maintain hazardous foods at the required temperatures.
4. Hazardous frozen foods must be thawed in a refrigerator or under cold running water. Frozen food is **not** to be thawed at room temperature.
5. Hot foods that require refrigeration must be cooled rapidly to 4°C (40°F). It must be held at that temperature until it is ready to reheat and serve. To cool food quickly, use an ice-water bath or place the food in shallow pans and refrigerate. The shallow pans should not be more than 10 cm (4 inches) deep.
6. Thermometers must be available for each cold and hot holding units.
7. A probe thermometer must be available to verify the internal temperature of all hot and cold hazardous foods. It is recommended to have a supply of single use alcohol swabs or another appropriate sanitizer to clean and sanitize the stem of the probe thermometer between uses.

Note: Foods which are at the improper temperature, or which have been contaminated must not be served to the public.

Section 4: Water and Ice

Water Supply

1. Only potable (safe to drink) water is allowed.
2. The water supply must either be connected to an inspected potable water system or be from an enclosed potable water holding tank hauling water from an inspected system.
3. The supply must be adequate for handwashing, food preparation, and equipment cleaning.
4. Food grade hoses are required when connecting to the potable water supply.

Ice

1. All ice must be made from potable water.
2. Ice to cool food, cans, or bottles must not be used in beverages or food preparation.
3. A food-grade scoop should be used to dispense ice.

Section 5: Handwashing Station

1. Every temporary food premise that handles an open food product must have their own separate handwash station. The handwash station must be in a convenient location within the food preparation area.
2. Washroom sinks cannot be used for this purpose.
3. Hand sanitizers do **not** replace the requirements for a separate handwash station. Hand sanitizer must only be used by non-food handlers (e.g., cashiers).
4. Disposable gloves do **not** replace the requirements for a separate handwash station. Disposable gloves may be used in addition to good hand hygiene practices. See [Section 6](#) for more information.
5. **For events lasting two (2) days or less and serving non-hazardous foods:**
 - a. A temporary handwash station will be permitted. A temporary handwash station consists of a:
 - Container with a spigot that is capable of providing a continuous flow of warm running water,
 - A supply of liquid soap, and
 - Paper towel in a dispenser.

Vendors must provide a wastewater collection container to collect the greywater from handwashing. A garbage container must be available for paper towel and other waste. See section 10 for solid and liquid waste management.

6. **For events lasting three (3) or more days or serving hazardous foods:**

- a. A temporary handwash station may be permitted. The use of a temporary handwash station will be determined by a public health inspector upon the completion of a risk assessment. The risk assessment will be based on the type of food being prepared and the level of onsite food handling.
- b. Based on the results of a risk assessment, a more structured handwash station may be required. An example is a foot pump operated handwash station equipped with running water, a supply of liquid soap, and paper towel in a dispenser. The station would include a wastewater collection container as well as a garbage container.

Section 6 Personal Hygiene

1. Food handlers must:

- a. Wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm water as often as necessary to prevent contamination of food and food contact surfaces. Handwashing must occur after handling hazardous or raw food, sneezing or coughing, touching something contaminated, returning from a break, using the washroom, or handling money.
- b. Ensure that they have headgear that confines the hair (e.g., hairnet, caps, scarf or visor, beard net, etc.).
- c. Wear clean outer garments.
- d. Be free from illness. **No** person who is sick with diarrhea, vomiting, cold or flu-like symptoms, or who has uncovered sores or cuts on their hands should handle food.
- e. **Not** smoke or vape within the temporary food premise.

2. When gloves are used, they must be changed in between tasks. Hands must be washed after taking off a used pair **and** before putting on a new pair of gloves. Washing or reusing gloves is not acceptable.

3. Where open food is handled and prepared:
 - a. Designate one person to be a support worker who does **not** handle food. That person will be responsible for things like emptying garbage and dirty wastewater containers, refilling fuel, replenishing soap, dishwashing, etc.
 - b. Designate one person to handle money/tickets. That person must **not** handle food.
4. Smoking or vaping is **not** permitted in any enclosed public places and workplaces under the [Smoke-Free Ontario Act](#).
5. “No Smoking” and “No Vaping” signs are provided by Northeastern Public Health. For more information or to place an order for signs, please contact your local office.

Section 7: Dishwashing and Utensils

1. Only single-use eating utensils will be allowed (e.g. plastic cutlery, plates, cups, etc.). All single-use utensils must be stored in a sanitary manner. Re-use of single-use utensils is not allowed.
2. Utensils for preparing or serving food must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized in a two-compartment sink. Each sink must be large enough to immerse the largest piece of equipment or utensil.
 - a. The washing and rinsing must occur in the first sink.
 - b. The chemical sanitizing step must occur in the second sink. See section 8 for chemical sanitizer solution mixture.
3. At the public health inspector’s discretion, a supply of extra utensils can be used instead of a two-compartment sink method if the utensils are:
 - a. Stored in a manner to prevent contamination during storage.
 - b. Changed at least every two hours or when contamination occurs.
 - c. Washed, rinsed, and sanitized using the two-compartment sink method.

See section 8 for chemical sanitizer solution for dishwashing:

Section 8: Sanitizing

1. All food preparation areas must be cleaned regularly. This is to be done using potable water and soap before sanitizing.
2. A sanitizing agent must be available to sanitize dishes in the second compartment of the two-compartment sink. It must also be available to sanitize surfaces. Use an approved sanitizer with test strips or use this chlorine solution:

A solution of chlorine bleach can be created:

100 ppm = 5 mL (1 teaspoon) unscented bleach (5.25% concentration) mixed with 1 Litre (4 cups) water

3. Wiping cloths or sponges for cleaning and sanitizing must be provided and stored in a sanitary manner. For example, if a bucket of sanitizer is being used, wiping cloths or sponges for sanitizing food contact surfaces must be stored in the sanitizing solution between uses.
4. Sanitizing solutions in spray bottles must be prepared fresh each day. Sanitizing solutions in buckets must be replaced every few hours, or sooner if they become visibly soiled.
5. Chemicals must be stored away from food products.
6. All chemical bottles must be properly labelled.

Section 9: Structure

1. All food contact surfaces must be smooth, non-absorbent, and easily cleanable.
2. Temporary food premises must have an overhead cover (e.g. canopy, umbrella, or tent). This is to protect the food from potential contamination.

Section 10: Solid and Liquid Waste Management

1. Adequately sized garbage containers with lids must be provided. The container must be durable, leak proof, and emptied regularly. Garbage containers must be provided:
 - a. Inside the booth for food handlers to use, including one for handwashing.
 - b. Outside the booth for the public to use.
2. All wastewater must drain into a covered, leak-proof wastewater collection container. Wastewater containers must be sized to accommodate an equal or greater volume of the potable water supply.
3. Wastewater must **not** be disposed of on the ground or into storm sewers. Arrange for the sanitary disposal of all wastewater.

Section 11: Exempt Groups

There is an exemption in the [Ontario Food Premises Regulation 493/17](#) that affects food safety and the public health inspection process for special events. If claimed, this exemption applies to the following groups:

- fraternal organizations;
- religious organizations;
- service clubs.

Exempt groups have two options:

1. **Option 1:** Groups **do not** have to follow Northeastern Public Health's Special Events Operating Guidelines, but under the Food Premises Regulation, **must** follow requirements #1, #2, and #3 listed below in order to receive the Health Unit's approval to operate.
2. **Option 2:** Follow the Northeastern Public Health's Special Events Operating Guidelines and be inspected like all other vendors, avoiding requirements #2 and #3.

Requirements for Exempt Groups include:

1. Notify Northeastern Public Health when the group plans to hold or take part in a special event. This can be done by completing the Special Event Permit Application Form and submitting it at least **15 days** before the event.
2. Post a notice stating that their food premise has not been inspected under the Food Premises Regulation. Northeastern Public Health can provide the notice sign.
3. Keep a list of foods donated to the event and include the name, address, and phone number of the donor. Northeastern Public Health can provide a template for this list.

Section 12: Examples of Potentially Hazardous Foods

- Roast turkey/chicken
- Any barbecued meat
- Roast beef, pork, lamb, etc.
- Chicken wings
- Spaghetti (with meat in the sauce or as meatballs)
- Meat pies (including Shepherd's pie/hash)
- Casseroles
- Chili, soups, stews, chowders, and gumbo
- Deli meats and cheeses (charcuterie boards, sandwiches)
- Chopped fruit and vegetables
- Egg, turkey, chicken, tuna, or salmon salad
- Salmon, tuna, or any other fish
- Shrimp and shellfish
- Omelets
- Cooked rice
- Baked potatoes (cooked and wrapped in foil)
- Coleslaw (or any other salad that contains mayonnaise)
- Potato or macaroni salad
- Chip/veggie dips
- Guacamole
- Cream-filled or cream-based pastries/baked goods
- Cheesecake
- Meringues
- Soufflé