



Mendocino County Health & Human Services Agency
Healthy People, Healthy Communities

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CATERING GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The California Retail Food Code (CAL CODE) does not specifically address caterers. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a set of criteria that will assist regulators and other interested parties in providing consistent enforcement of caterers with regard to CAL CODE. Since it is not possible to cover every type of catering function, these guidelines are to be used to determine where and how a caterer is to be regulated.

DEFINITIONS

- A. **CATERER:** Any person who operates from a permitted food establishment and who supplies food and related services including, but not limited to, an off premises catering function.
- B. **CATERING VEHICLE:** Vehicle upon which food, beverages and related serving equipment is transported to a catering function.
- C. **COMMISSARY:** A permitted food facility that services Caterers and where all of the following occur: food, containers or supplies are stored; food is prepared for sale or service at other locations; utensils are cleaned; liquid and solid waste are properly disposed; and potable water is obtained.
- D. **COOK-FOR-HIRE:** Any person hired to prepare and/or serve food at a private function. **All food prepared by a cook-for-hire is handled at the location of the private function.** No food is stored, prepared or handled, nor utensils washed or stored, at the private home of the cook-for-hire. No health permit is required.
- E. **OFF PREMISES CATERING FUNCTION:** Any private or public function where a caterer provides food and related services for a person or persons at a location other than their permitted food establishment. A function occurring on premises is not covered by these guidelines.
- F. **PRIVATE FUNCTION:** A function for, or restricted to, a particular group from which the public is excluded. Examples include, but are not limited to, private parties such as weddings and receptions.
- G. **PUBLIC FUNCTION:** A function to which the public is invited. Examples include, but are not limited to, promotional events and benefits.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. Any person doing business as a caterer, as previously defined, must have a valid health permit. (§114381)
- B. The caterer or at least one employee must possess a current food safety certificate. (§113947)
- C. Each employee must possess a current California Food Handler Card. (§113948)
- D. All food, prior to the function, shall be stored and prepared at the caterer's permitted food establishment, or other approved food facility. (§113789b)
- E. All utensils and equipment shall be washed and stored at the caterer's permitted food establishment. Prior to use all utensils shall be sanitized. (§114095, 114099, 114175)
- F. At all times that the caterer has control over the food, including periods of storage, preparation, transportation and service, all food shall be adequately protected so as to be maintained pure and free of contamination, adulteration, and spoilage. (§ 113980, 113982, 113984)
- G. Catering vehicles shall be maintained in a clean, sanitary condition. (§114257)
- H. Utensils and equipment shall be protected from contamination. (§114095, 114899)
- I. All potentially hazardous food (PHF) shall be transported, prepared & maintained at required temperatures. (§113996, 114004)
- J. The caterer shall not provide home prepared food at a catering function. (§114021, 114285)
- K. All food handlers shall wash their hands and arms with cleanser and warm water before commencing work, immediately after using toilet facilities, and as frequently as necessary to prevent contamination of food. (§113952, 113953.3)
- L. Toilet facilities shall be accessible within 200 feet of the catering function. (§114250, 114315, 114359)
- K. A Catering Kitchen is a food establishment and must meet applicable standards in Cal Code.