

Temporary Food Service at Events

March 2026

This is information for food vendors who operate at temporary events such as festivals, fairs and farmers markets.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact FoodLodging@vermont.gov.

Temporary Food Service Requirements

You must follow all these requirements while operating:

Sanitation

- **Handwashing:** Always have a handwashing station available (see next page for details).
- **Wash, rinse and sanitize:** Have a three-compartment sink to wash, rinse and sanitize dishes, utensils and equipment even if you do not expect to use it. Three plastic dishpans can be used instead of sinks.
- **Sanitization:** Keep your food stand clean. Have wiping cloths in clean sanitizing solution at the proper concentration level. Have testing strips available to check the concentration level.
- **Bare-hand contact:** Everyone working may **not touch** exposed, ready-to-eat food with bare hands. Use suitable utensils like deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use plastic or vinyl gloves, or dispensing equipment.
- **Personal Hygiene:** Everyone working must keep their hair back and wear clean outer clothing. Do not smoke or eat in food prep areas.

Temperature holding

- **Time as a Public Health Control:** You may choose to use Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC) instead of hot or cold holding. You must [follow the TPHC protocols](#) to use this method.
- **Cold holding capability:** Cold food must be kept at 41° F or below. Have proper mechanical refrigeration or use insulated chests if you can maintain temperature. If you use ice, make sure it does not contaminate food products or food contact surfaces (like tops of soda cans). On hot days, plan to have extra ice.
- **Hot holding capability:** Hot food must be kept at 135° F or above.
- **Adequate cooking:** Have temperature-measuring devices (for example, probe thermometers) that are appropriate for the food served to ensure adequate cooking.

Setup

- **Trash:** Trash containers must be covered.
- **Overhead cover:** A tent, canopy or other covering that protects all operations and equipment.
- **Floor cover:** A floor cover such as mats or a removable platform to control dust and allow for proper cleaning.
- **Water:** Water must come from an approved source, either a municipal water system or a private water system that has been tested and shows absence of *E. coli* and total coliform.
- **Wastewater:** Dispose dirty water in an approved wastewater system. Do not dump it on the ground or down storm drains.
- **Pest Control:** Flies and other insects are not allowed on food. Their presence is considered a critical violation during an inspection and requires compliance. Make sure food is covered. Screening is not required, but is recommended.

Handwashing Station

Frequent handwashing is essential for food safety. A handwashing station must **always be in place** when your temporary food service is operating. **If you do not have a functioning handwashing station, you will be asked to close.**

- Gloves, hand sanitizers and wet wipes are **not** substitutes for handwashing.
- You can purchase a portable handwashing station, or you can build one yourself.
- **A handwashing station must include:**
 - Hot and cold water or tempered water fed by gravity or pressure
 - Water container with continuous-flow spigot
 - Catch basin for wastewater
 - Liquid soap
 - Single-use paper towels
 - Wastebasket

If you are building a handwashing station by yourself, remember:

- All materials must be **food grade**.
- You need **hot water**. You must use an insulated container that will keep the water hot for the duration of your event or have a way to heat water onsite.
- There must be a **continuous-flow spigot**. You must have a hands-free spigot that can remain locked open while washing hands. A container with a push-button spigot can be retrofitted by replacing it with a continuous-flow spigot.

