



Exploring Options for San Diego County's Catering Ordinance

Department of Environmental Health (DEH) | Pilot Study Findings and Staff Recommendations



Board Direction 05/04/2016, Item 2: Conduct a pilot project to study catered food service for public events at local breweries and wineries. The pilot project included exploring options to develop a local catering ordinance that would implement food safety standards in alignment with the California Retail Food Code and provide a framework and set clear rules for catered food service countywide.

Background: San Diego County has a rapidly-growing winery and brewery industries, attracting a large number of residents and visitors who want to enjoy food with their beer and wine tastings. There is a need for alternative food service similar to catering that can allow for direct food sales. State law does not specifically define catering or operating requirements, nor does the local County Code. Establishing these requirements in a local ordinance will provide a framework for catering operations that can address the current business model while providing consistency and protecting public health.

Public Health Risk Factors for Foodborne Illness

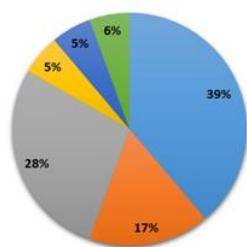
The top risk factors identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for foodborne illnesses are: improper holding temperatures of potentially hazardous foods, poor employee hygiene (hand washing), improper cooking temperatures, contaminated equipment and utensils, and food from unsafe sources.

Most common risk factor violations observed during the study:

- **Cold holding:** This was one of the top risk factors observed. Warmer temperatures allow bacteria that causes foodborne illness to multiply faster. 84% of the cold holding violations observed were associated with ice chests, not refrigerators
- **Access to a warewashing sink:** Vendors need access to a warewashing sink to properly rinse and sanitize equipment or utensils that became contaminated while operating in the field. Less than half (44%) of the foodhandlers had access to a warewashing sink.
- **Handwashing sink access:** A lack of proper handwashing can lead to contamination of the food. Only 50% of the foodhandlers had adequate access to a hand sink.

When standards food safety requirements are met, risk factors do not change based on whether direct or indirect sales are being conducted.

Food Vendor Permit Type



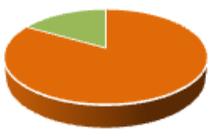
- Special Event
- Restaurant
- Caterer
- Brewery
- Illegal Vendor
- Winery

Catering to Set # of Guests



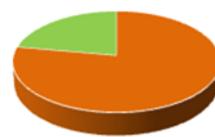
- Yes
- No

Access to Permanent/Commercial Restroom



- Yes
- No

Food Sold Directly to Public



- Yes
- No

Foodhandler Access to Warewashing Sink



- Yes
- No

Recommendations for Local Catering Ordinance Based on Study

ESTABLISH A DIRECT SALES CATERING PERMIT

(For food sold directly to the public, not in association with an event):

- **Food preparation:** At approved commissary with minimal preparation at a permitted host facility.
- **Inspections:** One commissary inspection and one field inspection to verify food safety at events. Upon request, caterers to provide list of locations where they will operate.
- **Plan Review:** For new caterers (review menu, equipment, overhead protection and transportation).
- **Consultation:** For existing caterers adding direct sales (review equipment and operational changes).
- **Caterers:** Will implement the following to protect food safety:
 - ✚ Provide mechanical refrigeration for potentially hazardous food that must be kept cold
 - ✚ Provide an approved handwashing station in their food preparation area
 - ✚ Have access to the host facility's 3-compartment sink
 - ✚ Discard prepared potentially hazardous foods at the end of the operational period

ESTABLISH A HOST FACILITY PERMIT

(Obtained by host supporting direct sales caterers)

- **Plan Review or Consultation:** Based on previous building and other applicable approvals obtained for the facility. DEH to develop flowchart to help host facility determine changes needed to support direct sales operations and guide host facility through plan review or consultation.
- **Host facility will supply caterer with:** Potable water source, 3-compartment warewashing sink, water heater, mop sink, hand sink, electricity and commercial restroom
- **Inspections:** Annual inspections, align with inspection of direct sales caterer operations

MODIFY EXISTING CATERING PROGRAM

(For private events)

- **Inspections:** Implement one field inspection of caterers to verify the food safety at events in addition to the routine inspection performed at the commissary.
- **Caterers:** To protect food safety and assist with trace back investigations for recalls and foodborne illness, caterers to implement the following:
 - ✚ Provide food safety instructions to event organizers when only delivering food (not serving it)
 - ✚ Establish operating procedures for keeping food safe while operating at private events
 - ✚ Maintain event records for 90 days, including: event's name, menu and contact information