



Food Safety Guidance for Farmers' Market Traders

South Norfolk Council - 2011



HOW THIS LEAFLET WILL HELP YOU

This leaflet will explain how to meet the food safety laws that apply to you while trading at a farmers' market. This is not a detailed guide to legal requirements, but it covers the basics.

Farmers' markets are routinely visited by the Council's Food Team Officers as part of our programme of food hygiene inspections for all types of food business. The officers will always be pleased to assist you with advice and guidance during their visit.



1. HYGIENE - CONTROLLING HAZARDS

The law requires you to identify possible hazards to food safety, know which of these is actually important for the type of food that you prepare or sell, and to provide suitable controls to stop the problems occurring. Simple measures are all that is required for most traders at a farmers' market. The most important of these are described below.

i. Transportation

- Food transported to a market must be wrapped, covered or placed in suitable containers to prevent contamination. Vehicles used to transport food to and from the farmers market should be kept clean and in good repair, so that the risks of food becoming contaminated are minimised.
- Simple cardboard boxes and paper-lined crates are fine for fruit and vegetables, but for ready to eat foods, bakery products and meats you should use containers that can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected e.g. plastic trays or insulated boxes.
- Some foods must be kept cold (below 8°C) to control the growth of food poisoning bacteria. These include soft or semi-hard cheeses, most dairy products, cooked meat and vegetable products, most smoked or cured meat and fish and shellfish. Insulated containers with icepacks and a thermometer are usually sufficient for this purpose. Temperatures should be checked from time to time and this can easily be done by leaving a fridge thermometer in the container. It is good practice to keep a written log of the temperatures and the time they were noted. Larger volume traders should consider using refrigerated vehicles.

ii. Preparation

- The surface that you lay out or prepare food on must be smooth and impervious so that it can be thoroughly cleaned. If you are using wooden tables, you must provide plastic sheeting or other suitable covering material.
- You will need to wash and dry your hands from time to time and if facilities are not provided on site, you must bring your own. For ready to eat high risk foods such as cooked meat, meat pies, dairy products and seafood there must be handwashing facilities at the stall. These should include a supply of hot water, towels, bowl and soap. Insulated flasks can be used for the hot water supply.
- If you are using knives or other serving implements you will need washing facilities for these, which must not be the same as those used for handwashing - separate bowls or sinks must be used.
- Wear clean protective over clothing while handling unwrapped food.

iii. Display and Service

- To avoid possible contamination, food must not be placed directly onto the floor. It is best to keep all unwrapped food off the ground.
- To reduce the risk of ready to eat foods becoming cross-contaminated by contact with raw foods they should be kept apart. Open ready to eat foods e.g. pies should be protected from the public touching, coughing or sneezing on them.
- Check the temperature of chilled foods from time to time and preferably keep a record of this in a logbook. Make sure you know the correct temperature for the food that you are selling.
- Ice packs can be used to keep food chilled whilst it is on display. This is done by placing the tray or plate of food on several ice packs.
- Regularly clean surfaces using a suitable anti-bacterial kitchen surface cleaner and a clean (preferably disposable) cloth or paper towel.
- If the market does not have refuse services, make sure you have sacks or containers for waste food and water.

iv. Cooking

Raw ingredients and cooked food must be adequately separated to avoid cross-contamination. Good hand washing facilities must be available. Food must be thoroughly cooked to ensure that harmful bacteria are destroyed. If food is to be kept hot whilst on display or awaiting serving, it should be kept at a temperature of at least 63°C. A food probe thermometer should be used to confirm this, with regular temperature checks being carried out.

v. Training and basic hygiene measures

It is not obligatory in law for all market traders to have attended courses on training in food hygiene but you must at least be aware of the basic principles that apply to the safe handling and preparation of food. However, if you have no experience of running a retail food stall or business, or if you are manufacturing food at home or from other premises, you will need some specific

training. Food hygiene training courses are always strongly recommended for anyone involved in the running of a food business. Indeed, you may find that your local market will require evidence of such training before allowing you to join.

For basic retailing operations, such as for selling fruit and vegetables, or for bakery products that do not contain meat or cream, the following advice should be of help.

- Keep yourself clean and wear protective clothing.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly before handling food, after using the toilet, handling raw food or waste and after every break.
- If you have a skin, nose or throat problem or an infected wound, do not handle unwrapped food.
- If you have a stomach upset, do not handle food for at least 48 hours after you are free of symptoms.
- Ensure that cuts, spots or sores are covered with a brightly coloured waterproof plaster.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink where open food is handled.
- Clean as you go - keep all equipment and surfaces clean and disinfected.
- Avoid unnecessary handling of food.

vi. Food Safety Management System

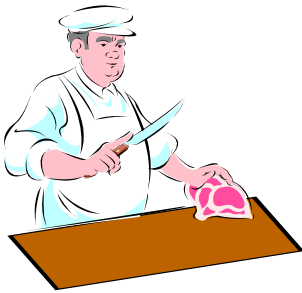
All food businesses must have some documentation which explains what food safety hazards are relevant to their operation and how these will be controlled and monitored. This documentation is called a food safety management system. If you are handling low risk food such as cakes, preserves or vegetables this documentation only needs to be very simple. If you are handling high risk foods then the recommended system is the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business pack. You can obtain a free copy by calling 0845 606 0667 or email foodstandards@ecgroup.co.uk.



2. DO I NEED TO BE REGISTERED?

It is a legal requirement for food businesses (including farmers markets) to be registered with their local authority. Registration is free of charge. The form you need can be obtained from the Council. For farmers markets, you do not need to register each market site you will attending, but only the premises where you normally keep the stall overnight. In most cases, this will be your home, farm or smallholding.

3. SELLING YOUR FARM-PRODUCED MEAT



Many aspects of the sale of meat have their own sets of rules and regulations. The issues usually relating to farmers markets are covered below.

i. Getting your meat cut for you

You may well be used to having some of your animals sent to a local slaughterhouse and the meat cut up there or at a local butcher, before being sent back to you for your own consumption. However, you may need to do things differently if you intend to sell this meat from your own premises or stall.

If you have a local meat cutting plant that will cut your meat for you at a reasonable price, you must use it. However, if there is no local cutting plant or the plant is just not interested in cutting small quantities for you, it is acceptable for a local butcher to cut your meats at their shop. You must sell meat cut at a local butchers directly to the public, and not supply it to any other food businesses.

ii. Cutting up meat yourself

You may cut the meat yourself at your farm or other premises you own, providing it is only going to be sold from your farmers market stall. You may not supply the meat to any other food businesses.

4. MANUFACTURING FOOD AT HOME FOR SALE FROM YOUR MARKET STALL



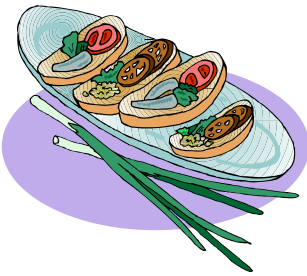
i. Making low risk items such as cakes and jams

Generally these present few problems and many people safely produce a range of jams and non-dairy cakes from home. You must make sure you know about the basics of food hygiene and law and also the labelling and shelf-life requirements that apply. For guidance on labelling requirements contact Trading Standards.

ii. Making high risk items such as meat, dairy and fish products

These foods are much higher risk because they support the growth of harmful bacteria and are often sold ready to eat without further cooking. A mistake in their preparation and handling can have serious consequences for public health. If you intend to produce such products which include hams, pates, ice-cream, cheeses, yoghurts and prepared foods such as meat pies, lasagne, shepherds pies etc. you should contact the Council's Food Team for advice before you start. You will almost certainly need to undertake some formal training in food hygiene and you will be required to prepare a detailed documented food safety management system for the operation, as mentioned above in Section 1 (vi).

5. GIVING AWAY FREE SAMPLES



You may want to introduce your customers to as wide a range of your foods as possible and having tasting samples available is a good way to get their attention. Bear in mind that even though you may give samples away free of charge, the law sees this transaction as a sale, and their production and handling is still subject to legal control. Samples need to be protected from contamination especially from the public. If your customers have to handle your food, try and make sure they don't touch other samples on the plate - cocktail sticks or tongs help to stop this. Most importantly, don't leave food that must be chilled for safety reasons out of temperature control for long periods, especially during hot weather.

You may find your local market has its own conditions about food samples and they may not be permitted. This is at the discretion of the market organiser rather than any national legal requirement.



6. ANIMAL ATTRACTIONS AT FARMERS MARKETS

Some farmers markets use animals as an additional attraction to the produce stalls. They can be petted, fed or just admired and in most cases these will be part of the host farm or premises and not your direct responsibility as a stallholder.

Bacteria such as E. coli O157 can cause serious illness that can be fatal in young children or cause life-long disability through kidney failure. As a result, you need to be very careful about managing any animals that you have on show. The Council's Food Team can provide you with guidance on what to do to reduce risks. Some key advice is listed below.

- If you are bringing animals in, first make sure you have the necessary movement permits; contact a Trading Standards Officer at Norfolk County Council Trading Standards department for information.
- Make sure your animals are transported separately from your foodstuffs. The holding pen at the market must be well separated from your food stall and the animals should not have to be led to the pen past or close to other food stalls.
- If the animals are to be petted or fed, they must be supervised and you should have handwashing facilities present for the public to use, this should include hot water, soap and paper towels.
- If visitors bring picnics or eat any of the food that they have bought on site, this should not be allowed to take place close to animals.
- Ensure children are supervised by adults and that children do not put fingers in their mouth or kiss the animals.

7. Useful contacts:

South Norfolk Council - Food Team

Telephone: 01508 533714 web: www.south-norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Trading Standards

Telephone: 0344 800 8020 web: www.norfolk.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Farmers Retail Market Association

Telephone: 0845 4588420 web: www.farma.org.uk

National Farmers Union

Telephone: 024 7685 8500 web: www.nfuonline.com

Natural England

Telephone: 0114 241 8920 web: www.naturalengland.org.uk

The Food Standards Agency

Telephone: (helpline) 020 7276 8829 web: www.food.gov.uk

The Country Land and Business Association

Telephone: 020 7235 0511 web: www.cla.org.uk

