

Guidelines for Providing Safe Food Samples at the Market

Safe preparation

Use clean surfaces and utensils, good personal hygiene, and proper storage for prepared samples. Do as much prep at home as possible to avoid having to do it at the market where you may not have access to handwashing and utensil washing. If you must prepare samples at the market, work on a clean surface, with clean utensils and make sure to wear gloves on clean hands. Wash fruits and vegetables in clean water prior to cutting, and once washed, store them so they do not become soiled.



Keep your hands clean

Hands must be washed after smoking, eating, drinking, using the restroom, or any other time contamination occurs. Remember to wash your hands frequently and always before putting on gloves. Use of hand sanitizer does not take the place of washing your hands with warm soapy water. You can set up a simple handwashing station with a water dispenser, catch basin, soap and disposable paper towels.

Barrier between hand and food

Tongs, spoons, single-use deli paper, plastic ramekins, toothpicks or disposable gloves are a few examples of good tools. Bring extra with you to the market so you do not run out. Remember: gloves must be placed on clean hands and changed often, and they do not substitute for proper hand washing.

Keep equipment clean

It is important that any knives, tongs, bowls, etc. that you use for your food samples is kept clean. You can make sure they stay clean if you follow a three step process of: wash in hot soapy water, rinse in clean water, and a 2 minute soak in a mild bleach-water solution, afterwards, letting the utensil air-dry. Bleach should be added at a ratio of about 1 teaspoon per gallon of water, which equates to about 50 ppm. This can be measured using chlorine test strips. Set this washing station up in three small plastic tubs.



Limitation of exposure time

If your sample requires refrigeration, limit its exposure to outside temperatures to 4 hours or less. After the 4 hours is up, discard any uneaten food samples. Keep extra samples cold in a cooler with ice packs.

Protection from the environment

You must protect the samples from the elements, pests (insect or birds) and dirty fingers. Display samples under covering like a dome or plastic wrap. To prevent customers from touching samples other than their own, place individual samples in single-serving containers or provide toothpicks.

Protect allergic customers

Have signs or other materials that alert customers of the 8 major allergens that might be present in your products: milk, eggs, crustacean shellfish, finfish, tree nuts, wheat, peanuts, and soybeans. You do not want to unintentionally cause someone to have an allergic reaction to your food.

