



Catering requires a permit

Because safe food is good business

Catering Permits Protect Customers and Businesses

By Matt Hadorn, Environmental Health Specialist I

Interested in starting a catering business? Before you do, consider this: your success depends on the safety of your food.

What does a catering business look like?

In Pierce County, catering is defined as a contract with:

- An exact menu.
- A set number of prepared meals per event.
- Service for events that are typically private (like parties, weddings, meetings).
- Food served at the caterer's facility or food and equipment transported to the event for serving and/or set up.

Retail food establishments preparing regular menu items (like pizza or sandwiches) for delivery or customer pick up are not considered caterers.

continued on page 2

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 Donate Excess Food to Feed Those in Need
- 2 Fact or Fiction?
- 3 Combating Norovirus in Schools
- 4 New Faces
- 4 Contact Us



Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Catering

continued from page 1

What is the risk associated with catering?

Nobody wants to make their customers sick, but every year, one in four Washingtonians gets foodborne illness—and 11% of those illnesses come from catered meals. That's nearly 200,000 foodborne illnesses each year in Washington from catering alone!

Foodborne illness costs businesses money. Businesses are liable for the cost of customers' illnesses and also run the risk of:

- Extra labor costs for cleaning.
- Lost business caused by negative publicity.

- Closure following the outbreak.
- Discarded material and supplies.
- Additional unforeseen losses.

Caterers are especially susceptible because word travels fast among affected customers so it's easier to link illness outbreaks to private events.

What can caterers do to keep their food safe and their business successful?

Get permitted.

Anyone who wants to cater must have a permit. Meeting permit requirements shows you are



well equipped to safely prepare, transport, handle and serve food. The Health Department regularly inspects caterers and provides resources to help caterers keep their food, customers and business safe.

For more information about catering, call (253) 798-4711 or visit www.tpchd.org/food.

Donate Excess Food to Feed Those in Need

In 2014, Pierce County food banks served 242,400 people—that's nearly 30% of the county's total population.

The Health Department and the Emergency Food Network encourage food establishments to donate their excess food



to help fight hunger in our communities. Donations not only feed our neighbors in need, they also reduce waste and methane gas emissions in our landfills.

Businesses that donate food in good faith are legally protected from liability under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.

It's important to ensure all donated food is safe to eat. To donate food, you must follow these rules:

- The food must be safe. Throughout preparation,

holding and serving you must keep food at the proper temperature.

- Potentially hazardous food must be held at the proper temperature. Keep cold food at 41°F or below. Keep hot food at 135°F or above.
- Quickly cool hot food to 41°F.
- When time is used in place of temperature control, food can't be donated.

For more information about donating excess food, call the Emergency Food Network at (253) 584-1040.

Fact or Fiction?

By Matt Hadorn, Environmental Health Specialist I

If food sits out for a few hours, I can just cook it to make it safe.

Fiction. While thorough cooking reduces or kills harmful bacteria, food left in the temperature danger zone may grow more bacteria than cooking can kill. Some bacteria can even survive boiling! Always keep food below 41°F or above 135°F. And when cooling food, cool it rapidly.

Food that looks, smells and feels normal won't make people sick.

Fiction. Most foodborne illness is caused by food that looks, smells and feels normal. To keep food safe and avoid making people sick, cook thoroughly, separate raw and ready-to-eat food and maintain proper holding temperatures (below 41°F or above 135°F).

I can touch bread with bare hands if I'm going to toast it later.

Fiction. You can't heat ready-to-eat food thoroughly enough to make it safe after touching it. With bread, its texture, composition and ingredients keep germs safe during toasting and heating. When handling ready-to-eat food, always use barriers like gloves, tongs or deli tissue.

Simply following best practices in my kitchen can help make my food safe.

Fact. Food can become contaminated before it gets to the kitchen. But proper kitchen procedures can eliminate most risk for foodborne illness. Best practices like handwashing, thorough cooking and rapid cooling will help keep your food, customers and business safe.

Combating Norovirus in Schools

A Food Advisory Boardmember shares their experience

Dealing with a norovirus outbreak in an elementary school may seem like a daunting task, but by addressing the problem and taking the proper steps to clean the building, anyone can handle it easily.

With the purposeful use of hand sanitizers and good handwashing practices before lunch, we successfully avoided a norovirus outbreak for many years.



Then, in May 2015, we noticed an increase in students absent due to illness. When 8% of the student body was absent, we began to suspect a norovirus outbreak.

We sent the kids home and a team of custodians cleaned every square inch of the building. They worked through the night scrubbing walls, floors, door handles and bathrooms to get the school ready for the kids' return.

The next day the kids arrived to a sparkling clean school. When they went to lunch, they discovered things had changed there, too. In place of the

all-you-care-to-take self-serve salad bars, substitute workers now served a limited selection of fruits and vegetables.

As each child entered the lunchroom, they were handed a tray, milk and utensils, and were guided to the staffed salad bar to select that portion of their meal. Then they went to the serving line to select their entrée—all without touching anything except their own tray.

This process lasted the next three days and by then the number of kids absent from school declined rapidly. By the beginning of the next week, things were back to normal.

New Faces



Natalia Eide

has been with the team since February. Natalia graduated from Central Washington University with a Bachelor's Degree in public health. She has seven years of experience working in service delis.



Dani Toepelt

joined the team in April. Dani graduated from Washington State University Vancouver with a Bachelor's Degree in biology. She previously worked in food service industry and for Lewis County.



Emily Nehser

joined the team in April. Emily graduated from Pacific Lutheran University with a Bachelor's Degree in biology. She has several years of supervisory experience with campus dining services.

Contact Us

food@tpchd.org

www.tpchd.org/food

Main Line

(253) 798-6460

Plan Review

(253) 798-4711

Temporary Events

(253) 798-4709

Illness Reports

(253) 798-4712

General Concerns

(253) 798-4559



Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Food Safety Program
3629 South D Street, MS 1059
Tacoma, WA 98418-6813